



**THE SHOP IS EQUIPPED** to turn out horseshoes, also, but up to now it has had trouble keeping up with orders for shoeing tools only. Eckerich is shown working on one of the countless varieties of shoes turned out.



**THE SIGN** is as simple as this firm's guiding principle — "Your money's worth." Left to right are Dale Sprout, an employee; George Earnest, founder of the firm who maintains a lifetime interest in it; and Adam Eckerich, former OTI instructor who carries on the tradition that has given the firm a good name in every state.

# Proud Tradition Of The Old Blacksmith Carried On In Unique Klamath Business

By DEAN A. KRENZ  
It takes a lot more than 75 years of progress to get ahead of a man like George Earnest of Klamath Falls.  
He saw his trade, blacksmithing, fall victim to the coming of the automobile and new metal working methods, but at 65 years of age he founded a business that now serves customers in the 50 states, Canada and Mexico.  
Although Earnest, one of the vanishing breed of craftsmen and strong individualists, is officially retired, he still takes an active part in the business he sold a year ago to Adam Eckerich, former OTI instructor.  
GE Forge and Tool Works (GE

stands for George Earnest) turns out a complete line of horseshoeing tools. Specializing in this line, the firm may be the only one of its type in the nation.  
Judging from the orders that flood into the local shop at Oak and Broad Street in Klamath Falls, Eckerich and Earnest are convinced they have the whole field to themselves.  
**Will Expand**  
Under Eckerich's direction the firm will expand its tool-making facilities so that it can meet the avalanche of orders. Earnest drops into the shop at his leisure to see how the boys are doing and to have a look at their prod-

uct, the tools he designed a decade ago.  
Tales of the honest, forthright blacksmith are no myths so far as Earnest and his successor are concerned. Whether orders come in written on the back of a tattered envelope by a cowpoke in Idaho or on fancy stationery from a rich eastern racing stable, the little firm faithfully turns out its best in the proud tradition Earnest knows so well.  
The ingredients for success are a product to fill a need, steadfast devotion to quality and enthusiastic word of mouth advertising that spread the good word from cowboy to saddle club mem-

ber to race horse handler to rodeo hand.  
Earnest was so well-known and trusted that prepaid orders from younger shoers might state simply, "You know what I want." The aging Scot-Dane proudly asserts he has probably put Klamath Falls on the map more times than any other single individual.  
Why the big demand for horse-shoeing equipment?  
Earnest explains it this way: There are now more horses in the country than there were 40 years ago, and they're better cared for. There are no longer any blacksmith shops where horses can be shod, so the owners need equipment to do the job.

cut and take in all the business coming his way. He recalls sending back checks for hundreds of dollars because he didn't have the time to fill orders.  
GE Forge and Tool now sells a complete set of tools for \$54. You pay for what you get — hand-forged, tempered and finished tools built to last. But Earnest remembers in the early 1900s when he earned \$4 a week as a learner in a blacksmith shop. In those days the smith would shoe a horse for \$1.50 and put new hoops on the washing machine (wooden tub) for two-bits.  
"A new washboard was the Christmas present every woman wanted and got," he recalled.



**THE OLD MASTER,** George Earnest, proudly shows off a plated set of the tools that go to eager customers all over the nation. He designed the tools 10 years ago.

**Traveled Widely**  
Earnest started life in Boston, but his trade carried him across the border of many states before he settled in Oregon some 30 years ago. Fresh in his mind are the rugged days in Pacific Northwest logging, mining and construction camps where he plied his trade and also worked at such miscellaneous jobs as waiter, timekeeper, and harnessmaker.  
On a construction job in British Columbia many years ago, Earnest held all these jobs simultaneously under a boss who was an expert in "deadheading his payroll" with non-existent help.  
Earnest is full of stories about "onery" mules and race track flokes . . . Like the time a mule kicked him in the head with his back foot while George was shoeing a front foot . . . and when he missed winning some \$1,300 on a single race because he didn't make it to the betting window in time.  
He admits he is likely to judge the horse by the shoes he wears, but Earnest said the only sure way to make money on races is to pick the horse that crosses the finish line first.  
Earnest's horseshoe tool business was started about 10 years ago when he retired from his regular job and contemplated a life of drawing social security checks. He didn't like the picture.  
Back in his shop he designed and turned out a set of shoeing tools. Soon he had a few sets out in the area that proved to be the seeds of a mushrooming business that has Earnest saying today, "I was born 30 years too soon."  
The old blacksmith is frankly amazed and says he sold out because he was too old to branch

**Thinks of Old Days**  
Earnest sighs when he thinks of the bygone days when kids crowded around the blacksmith shop door after school to see the  
(Continued on Page 3)

**THE PASSING OF THE VILLAGE SMITH**  
By George Earnest  
No more the village smith stands;  
The smith, that once most mighty man,  
No more can you hear his anvil ring,  
Nor see him swing his heavy sledge.  
No more can children home from school  
look in that open door  
To see him sweat and toil  
On that flaming red-hot forge.  
No more is he in demand  
To fix that wagon as of yore.  
For the changing ways of time  
have all but passed him by.  
Oh, he has no regrets,  
for he did his very best.  
He toiled from early morn til night  
and tried to treat all alike.  
Oh, he'd worry on some jobs  
and rejoice when they were done.  
Like the time he shod that vicious mule  
that kicked him out the door.  
He was a man among men  
And looked them all in the eye.  
For as he passes by  
He leaves no honest debt behind.  
Though like the noble horse,  
He passes on from a life of honest toil  
For he knows his day is done.  
With that noisy horseless wonder,  
Now they mostly lie at rest,  
In peaceful sleep . . .  
Their task on earth well done.