

## ***Longears Driving Play Day***

*by Sally Armstrong*

In the spirit of Columbus Day weekend, many of us who drive longears were discovering new lands as well. It was a great adventure hosted by Tom O'Carroll and Marlene Collins at their Good Hands Training Center in Navasota, Texas.

There were Miniature Donkeys, standard donkeys and Miss Millicent mule making her debut. It was also exciting to have three pairs of Miniature Donkeys driving at the event!

Saturday was spent "driving at will" to become acquainted with the course and the obstacles and a time for having just plain fun. Tom was kept busy fitting harnesses, modifying carts, and giving planned – as well as impromptu – lessons. Saturday evening was dinner at a local restaurant and we were "the party table".

Sunday was the day of serious competition. It's hard to call it "serious" competition when there was so much laughter and good-natured banter going back and forth, but there were ribbons and bragging rights at stake! A key volunteer who attends all the driving competitions there commented, "Y'all are funny! Not at all like the other events here." She was laughing as she said it so I am assuming she meant "comical" as opposed to "strange".

We had the chance to work on driving accuracy as we did a timed cones course and timed obstacles. We also did a mini-marathon with obstacles. Everyone left with new skills (mostly driving 😊), the experience of a new driving venue outside of a show ring, new friends, and great memories. I could share some great stories with y'all, but I'm going to save those for possible blackmail opportunities 😊. We all left Tom and Marlene telling them we want to do this again! So come join us the next time.

Combined Driving Events are the fastest growing equine sport in the country. They have a VSE (very small equine) division so Miniature Donkeys have a place. Mules fit right in too. There is even some movement afoot to create a longears division; so get out there with your longears and enjoy some competition outside of the traditional show ring.

For more information about Good Hands Training Center and future events, the website is [www.tocarroll.com](http://www.tocarroll.com) .