

BITS Distance Driving Clinic and Novice Drive

by Katy Rhinehart

An idea that began in January became a reality on May 21, 2006. The 1st Annual Best of Iowa in Traces Society (BITS) Distance Driving Clinic and Novice Drive was a huge success. All 20 entrants successfully completed the course and, as the Midwest Distance Driving Association (MDDA) says, "To Finish is to Win." President of BITS, Mary Winter, welcomed Jac Deweese and Wes Licht, leaders of MDDA, who had traveled from Wisconsin to help with the event. When they inspected the trail they were pleasantly surprised to see how much had been done by the BITS volunteers Gene and Katy Rhinehart, Steve and Sheryl Stillions, Mickey Hansen and her dad, Bob Hansen, Anita and Jim Schlosser, Eleanor Eagly, Earl Morris, and Mary Winter the weekend before. Wes and Jac finished the trail marking with the help of Earl Morris and Gene Rhinehart.

The "Vetting In" process was held on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. All horses passed the watchful eye of Dr. Christie Loiacono and her great help from the ISU vet students and volunteers and we were ready to compete. Unfortunately Jacklyn Smith, who had organized the agenda for the morning distance driving clinic, could not attend due to illness, but Steve Stillions put together the clinic materials into a special notebook for everyone. Speakers from BITS and MDDA

shared lots of information about the sport of distance driving, all without a hitch.

The schedule for the afternoon (the order of go) and the trail description completed our morning clinic. Sheryl Stillions reported that enough door prizes were donated that every paid driver and clinic auditor was able to receive one. Deb Moser, Edna Oakley, Sheryl Stillions, Katy Rhinehart and various other BITS members gave everyone from the clinic a bag of goodies that had been assembled earlier with information about MDDA, BITS, and other groups in Iowa that drive horses. It also contained donated items from a variety of sources.

The first driver, Gene Rhinehart, completed the safety check and started the 6-mile course promptly at 1 p.m. to the cheers of the audience and volunteers. This procedure was followed every 5 minutes by another driver until all 20 drivers were out. The course was a beautiful array of prairie meadow, hay fields, forest and wildlife. Baltimore orioles, blue jays, scarlet tanagers, indigo buntings and bluebirds were among some of the colorful creatures seen along the trail. On the hill you could hear people calling out "I'm coming down" or "I'm half way up!" as this part of the trail was navigated. It was fun to see other drivers on the route and be able to call out greetings as we passed. Although there were a few driving concerns about spots in the trail, everyone eventually

made it to the finish line without incident.

At the awards ceremony a special "thank you" hay bag was given to Dr. Christie for all her help and wheeljacks from Wrightway Trailers were given to Jac and Wes. All competitors received completion ribbons for finishing the course, with their horses passing the final vet check.

Paul Degen and Tilly, Mason City, IA, received 1st place with a score of 382 out of a perfect 400 points. The 2nd place went to Sheryl Stillions and Megan, Cedar Rapids, IA, with 376, 3rd place was awarded to Edna Oakley and Jake, Clear Lake, IA, 4th place was Vicki Fraser, Springfield, NE, and her horse, Joe, and 5th place went to Jada Neubauer, Ames, IA and another pony named Joe. There was a tie for 6th, with Deb Moser, Garber, IA, and her horse, Ken, and Katy Rhinehart, Ferguson, IA, and Gentry sharing honors. Other competitors were Anita Schlosser, Eleanor Eagly, Christy Hemken, Earl Morris, and Mary Winter, Ames, IA, Pat Ketterer, Lincoln, NE, Mickey Hansen, Mechanicsville, IA, Marjean McIntyre, Eagle, NE, Brian Morris, Gilbert, IA, Debra Knoll, Dallas Center, IA, Gene Rhinehart, Ferguson, IA, Brian Thompson, Williamsburg, IA, and Carmella Feldmann, Hopkinton, IA. You could hear people saying that, "Next time, I'll drive it this way or that way," so you know there will be a next time!

A big thank you to 3G Farms for hosting a wonderful event and to all the BITS volunteers and others who donated time, prizes, food and helped make this event safe and fun for everyone.



TOP ROW:

Edna Oakley, Clear Lake, IA, driving Jake, a Morgan, to third place in the Novice Drive. Her passenger is Hannah Schriever.
Photo by Randy Farwell

Paul Degen, Mason City, IA, and Tilly, his Fjord mare, are checked by Dr. Christie Loiacono before the Novice Drive. Paul and Tilly finished in first place at the event.
Photo by Steve Stillions



BOTTOM ROW:

Sheryl Stillions, Cedar Rapids, IA, drove Megan, her Friesian cross to second place in the Novice Drive.
Photo by Steve Stillions.

Vickie Fraser, Springfield, NE, and Jo, her appaloosa, took fourth in the Novice Drive.
Photo by Steve Stillions.

