

James and Fay Lowry: **ON THE FAST TRACK TO THE TOP**



Jim, Ebby, Audrey and Fay Lowry

BY KRISTI HAYS

James and Fay Lowry are one of those couples who, when you sit down and talk with them, you just get it. You understand why they are so successful, why they work so well together and how they maintain a happy marriage based on solid friendship and respect for one another. They have been on the fast track over the last few years, accomplishing in four years what takes most people at least a decade to achieve. And it couldn't happen to a more grounded, grateful, positive couple.

It all started in 1986 when Jim and Fay met at the New England Morgan Show. They both grew up showing Morgans; Jim in Indiana and Fay in South Carolina and North Dakota. After Fay graduated from the University of Georgia, the couple married. They moved to Indianapolis in 1991 and leased a barn. They trained Morgans almost exclusively, with the exception of starting the great harness stallion WC Revival for Stonecroft Farm.

In 2000, the couple relocated to Champaign, Illinois and found the university-based community to their liking. Exhibitors Dorothy and Kris Safanie were a huge help in getting the Lowrys settled in Champaign. "We couldn't have gotten started and bought our place without their help," Jim says.

After judging the Morgan classes at some major Saddlebred shows, Jim started making connections with more Saddlebred people. He remembers being inspired as a child by watching Don Harris and George Knight bring out, "one freak after another," at the River Ridge show. "There's nothing better to aspire to in saddle horses than Saddlebreds," Jim says. "Stake night at Louisville is just the biggest thing there is." Bob Ruxer sent him a horse to sell and things began to escalate for the Lowrys.



Audrey Lowry and Another Hot Summer Night



Jim Lowry and Major Buck



Jim Lowry and Catalyst's Work Of Art



Ebby Lowry and Cabot Carte Blanche at the 2007 World Championship Morgan Show

Being in the heart of the "Illini Nation," the Lowrys began to attract local residents from the joint communities of Champaign-Urbana. Urbana resident Irma Jean Gillespie came knocking and brought Harlem's Irish Dancer to the doorstep. Jim affectionately refers to her as his, "breakthrough horse." They turned many heads in 2005 in the Junior Park division, before the lusted-after mare got a winning bid from Emily Wiersma and the Knollwood camp. Around this time, Jim attended Louisville to horse shop for Morgan exhibitor, Priscilla Marconi.

"I knew Jim from the Morgan world," Priscilla explains. "When my old trainer retired, Jim was just on the cusp of getting into Saddlebreds and that was something I wanted to pursue as well," she says. Jim saw a stunning 2-year-old by the name of Catalyst's Work Of Art and Priscilla bought her on the spot, sight unseen. Jim cites his success with that mare as his greatest accomplishment. Not long after that, James got Gloria Vanderbilt sent to him and acquired Major Buck. Little did everyone know that this was the beginning of an onslaught on Louisville in 2006, the likes of which we have rarely seen by a "newcomer" of sorts to the Saddlebred circles.

Jim came to Louisville with a string for the first time, fully locked and loaded. And boy did, "the Morgan guy," stage a coup. He won a section of the 3-Year-Old Three-Gaited World's Championship with Gloria Vanderbilt, the 3-Year-Old Five-Gaited Mare class with Catalyst's Work Of Art and a section of the 2-Year-Old Three-Gaited class with Major Buck. "We didn't even realize at the time just

how big of a deal that was," Jim says. Jim and Fay were now on the national radar and since have acquired Saddlebred after Saddlebred, with 30 currently in training along with eight Morgans. "Maybe I'm not known as, 'the Morgan guy,' anymore," Jim laughs.

Certainly not. In fact, Jim is now revered as one of the top trainers in the country. Three of his customers are horse trainers, if you needed proof of his eminent reputation. He is known for consistently bringing out top young horses as well as top Amateur horses. "I love the young ones," Jim says. "Getting new ones every spring and watching them come along is so fun." Jim and Fay have, "a bunch of cool young ones," just waiting to hit the show ring.

Also new to their show string this year is A Cinderella Story, who has made the transition from Fine Harness to Pleasure Driving with shocking ease. She belongs to Karrie Graham, who gives the Lowrys rave reviews. "I love Fay and Jim," she says. "They are the most special, precious people I have ever met." She has had a gargantuan amount of success under their guidance with Stonecroft I'm Radiant, Stonecroft Nightlight and most recently, with Cinderella. "We've had Cinderella for a little over a month now and she's perfect for me," Karrie says. "She wasn't perfect for me yet when we got her but that's what's so great about Jim. He gets your horse exactly trained for you." Karrie continues, "He has given me so much confidence. I know he's not going to put me on something I can't ride."



Jim Lowry and Gloria Vanderbilt



Fay Lowry and Jane's Addiction



Jim and Fay display their winnings at the 2004 Morgan Grand National

JIM AND FAY ANSWER FOR EACH OTHER...

What's Jim's biggest self-indulgence?

Fay: iTunes

What's Fay's biggest self-indulgence?

Jim: Facebook. I've been replaced!

If Jim wasn't a horse trainer what would he be?

Fay: A lawyer. He likes to argue.

If Fay wasn't a horse trainer what would she be?

Jim: A schoolteacher

What's Jim's most annoying habit?

Fay: Not caring about what he's wearing.

What's Fay's most annoying habit?

Jim: Worrying too much about what I'm wearing!

If Jim could only eat one food for the rest of his life what would it be?

Fay: Mac and cheese

If Fay could only eat one food for the rest of her life what would it be?

Jim: Bread

Who would play Jim in a movie about his life?

Fay: Tom Hanks, because he's funny

Who would play Fay in a movie about her life?

Jim: Kate Winslet

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live?

Both: Lexington, Kentucky...we will live there when we're old.

If you could invent anything what would it be?

Both: A cure for all cancers

Who are your fantasy dinner party guests?

Both: Garland Bradshaw because so many people talk about him, the Pope, Catherine Zeta-Jones because I (Jim) always wonder who does her hair, Keith Urban and Abraham Lincoln. We live in Illinois so we definitely have to include Lincoln.

Karrie and Priscilla both tout the family-oriented atmosphere at the barn as being a resplendent quality. "They're a wonderful family," Priscilla says. "I have a great synergy with all of them, Jim has a great sense of humor."

Karrie agrees, "They're more than our trainers, they're our friends. Dwayne and I can call them up and go out to dinner, we can sit and have fun and not even talk horses."

Jim and Fay's beneficence comes from their positive attitudes and the belief that if you work hard to do things the right way, good things will happen to you. Good things are happening at Lowry Stables with a full show string of champions on tap. Besides the aforementioned *A Cinderella Story*, there is also *Stonecroft Nightlight* who Fay will be showing in Ladies Three-Gaited for the season. The always-solid, *Lace's Last Tango* will continue in the Amateur and Ladies Fine Harness divisions for Priscilla Marconi. Another entry of Priscilla's, *Catalyst's Blonde Ambition*, is racking after showing successfully in Fine Harness and Three-Gaited over the past couple seasons. *Major Buck* and *Kathryne Stief* are a sight in Amateur Park. *Rebecca Boorstein* won in the Junior Exhibitor division at the Morgan Grand National and has now switched over to Saddlebreds. She recently purchased *Stonecroft I'm Radiant* to show in Junior Exhibitor Pleasure. Jim keeps all these horses and more happy with his practice of finding what suits them best and keeping them healthy and happy. "I have sign in my barn that says, 'You can't teach a pig to sing, it wastes your time and annoys the pig,'" Jim says.

This is a doctrine which can be applied to children as well as horses, and Jim and Fay have proven to be sagacious parents to their two daughters. Audrey is probably the one you're most familiar with. She regularly shows her Three-Gaited Pony, *Another Hot Summer Night*, to top ribbons everywhere she goes. "I let her ride a gaited horse over the winter and now she wants one of those," Jim says. Fay notes that 13-year-old Audrey is the competitive one of the two girls. "She was third in the state in pole vaulting," Jim proudly adds.

Ebby is 17 and in Jim's words, "proved she could do it and retired on top." She won a National title with her Morgan in 2007 and now focuses on cheerleading and being a good student. "We're very lucky to have two grounded girls," Fay and Jim agree.

When they're not running one of the top barns in Illinois or watching their daughters excel in all arenas of life, Jim and Fay enjoy traveling. Jim also has a passion for playing the drums and describes himself as a, "wannabe Chad Graham Band member." "I'm just waiting for an invite," he says. Who knows, with the rate at which the Lowrys accomplish things you might see Jim playing for a crowd of 16,000 plus in Assembly Hall within the next couple years! But for now the Saddlebred community will keep him tapping to organ music, as he brings one special horse after another into show rings around the country.