



An Alabama native, Jim Graham has been eventing for 30 years. A member of the 1994 3-Day Team who rode at The Hague World Equestrian Games, Jim has also represented the USA at the Burghley and Rolex Kentucky CCI\*\*\*\* and CCI\*\*\*, as well as Punchestown (Ireland), Fairhill CCI\*\*\* and Checkmate CCI\*\*\*.

Jim is a:

- US Pony Club A Graduate,
- a past US Equestrian Team selector,
- an FEI "I" Judge,
- an USEF "R" Judge
- and a Technical Delegate.

He has trained with: Mark Phillips, Jimmy Wofford, Jack LeGoff, Bruce Davidson, Tad Coffin, Lars Sedarholm – The Best of the Best! All have something interesting to say and the theory blends into the making of champions.

In 1992, after narrowly missing the squad of USET horses that went to Barcelona, Jim re-grouped and with "Easter Parade", known as "Rosie" by his fans, Jim was then sponsored by Centel. This allowed them to move to England and train full time with Mark Phillips. This enabled this combination to be more competitive at the CCI\*\*\*\* level. While competing in England at numerous advanced horse trials and the Burghley CCI\*\*\*\*, they were named to the Team to ride at the Hague. While "Rosie" and Jim had the ride of their career together there, Rosie was retired from the competition at the final trot up due to a pulled muscle.

Jim is not only known for his riding ability, but is also a very sought-after clinician as he conducts clinics on a regular basis throughout the USA. Jim has an ability to teach the horse and rider with his time-tested approach and theory that is, according to many of his students, "*amazing*". Many of the riders he sees in clinics come back to Jim time and time again.

Jim has coached Young Rider's teams for areas II, III, and IV. In 1999, Jim coached the Area IV NAYRC CCI\* Team to Gold in Wadsworth, Ill. Also, a combined team of Jim's Area IV CCI\*\* riders (along with Area VI), won the NAYRC CCI\*\* Gold Medal. Numerous other students have gone on to the Advanced level. Most recently one of Jim's local students, Debbie Crowley, won the 2003 Radnor CCI\*\*. In the spring '05 Jim had two students in his barn competing at the CCI\*\* and CCI\*\*\* levels at Foxhall.

Even with the hectic schedule of conducting clinics, as well as judging and officiating Jim still finds time to provide consistent training to his full-time staff and horses in training. "I really enjoy making horses. It is very rewarding when a horse learns or really confirms a lesson!" The same is true for each student, whether they are full time or at a clinic.

### **Jim's Theory:**

Each person is unique and each horse is unique and should be trained accordingly." After saying that, there is a system that Jim uses faithfully:

**FF: Forward First** – defined as the horse be physically pushing from the quarters and be mentally available. How do we encourage horses to be mentally available? Simply by asking questions, putting them in various exercises to enhance the brain!

**B: Second part of the Checklist – second letter in the alphabet – Balance!** This is the rider's centered position over the middle of the horse (position for Dressage & Jumping). As for the Horse, we have 3 choices: 1) Level Balance, 2) Downhill Balance, and 3) Uphill Balance. The obvious correct balance is the uphill balance (similar to a motor boat in the water – the stronger it

goes the deeper the motor goes into the water while lifting the front of the boat (horse)). This balance takes time to train both the muscling and the brain of the horse to carry uphill.

**(3) Rhythm** – While some people have better rhythm than others, so do some horses.

**(4) Supple** – Flexibility of the horse and rider to enhance the full potential to work with, rather than against, the impulsion.

**(5) Straight** – Just as important as Forward (which is first) but more difficult to ride, teach and judge!

Jim teaches the horse and rider to feel elastic yet forward movement on the flat and to fences. There is no quick fix as this is truly a **"Sport of Years"**.