



Jim Segerstrom

1946-2007

Jim Segerstrom, founder of Rescue 3 International and renowned swiftwater search & rescue expert, died February 5, 2007 in San Francisco, CA of a cerebral hemorrhage.

He was the founder and formerly Vice President for Operations for Rescue 3 International for 21 years and the originator of the Swiftwater Rescue Technician program, which, since its founding, has been taught to nearly 70,000 people in 11 countries. Segerstrom was the Executive Director of Special Rescue Services Group, a consulting and training concern based in Sonora, California, a small community in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. He was also a Managing Director for Canadian/US consortium, World Rescue Services, Inc, which is based in San Rafael, California.

Jim Segerstrom attended the University of the Pacific, in Stockton, California, earning a BA in Business. He also completed a year of the Masters program in Business at California State University, Sacramento. After two years in commercial banking, he traveled in Europe, earning a diploma as an apprentice climbing guide in Switzerland. On his return to the US, he spent several years in a family mining business, where he earned one of the first EMT certificates issued by the state of Nevada in 1973. Returning to Sonora he purchased an interest in a mountaineering store, started working as a scuba diver, did some work as a stunt/safety person for movie companies, and became a commercial guide and head

boatman on California's whitewater rivers. Those jobs lead Jim into helping found the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team, which has become one of the busiest and most noted in the western US. The team quickly became noted for its high degree of expertise in rope rescue, its cross-training with military rescue helicopters, and its singular skills at river rescue. In 1979 Jim Segerstrom founded Rescue 3. The company gained national prominence for the Swiftwater Rescue Technician courses it was delivering, first accredited by the United States Lifesaving Association, and after 1984 by the International Rescue Instructors Association, of which Jim was a founding member as well.

In 1977, as part of his duties with the Sheriff's office, Segerstrom completed training as a paramedic and EMT instructor. He worked as a full-time paramedic, while running Rescue 3 as well, for 17 years. He was also one of the first flight paramedics, in 1978, for Mediflight of Northern California. In 1980 Rescue 3 started teaching what has remained the only successful commercial helicopter rescue training program taught in the U.S., a course which is now taught to civilian rescue personnel in several states, and was the template for the course being taught to California USAR/OES Swiftwater/Flood Rescue Team.

In 1989 Segerstrom served in the Working Groups of the National Urban Search and Rescue Advisory Committee to the National USAR Response System, contributing his expertise in wilderness SAR and swiftwater and flood response to the National USAR System Description Manual. In 1995 he helped California OES create its swiftwater/flood response system and equipment list, and in 1997 was activated as a technical specialist during the catastrophic January floods in California. He served as Rescue Group liaison, coordinating both local and state flood resources during flooding that inundated large areas of the state, destroying over 5000 homes, and displacing nearly 200,000 people. Due to California's preparedness and high levels of training only 11 lives were lost. Segerstrom has continued to serve as an on-call Technical Specialist to Special Operations, Fire/Rescue Branch of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services since that time, working on the committee which has designed the Firescope descriptions and typing for California's swiftwater and flood response capabilities.

In 1999 he was asked to serve in a similar capacity for Texas A and M, which is mandated to provide similar emergency services for the state of Texas. He has worked on the committee which has designed the Texas State Swiftwater/Flood Strike Teams, the training and equipping for which commenced in May of 2000. He is a member of the National Flood Response Plan Working Group, helping craft the national flood preparation and response system for the US.

He has taught rescue teams and fire agencies in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. Some of the nearly 700 instructors who completed the Rescue 3 instructors course he wrote have taken the swiftwater training to India, Tibet, Zimbabwe, Sweden, Norway, South Africa, France, and Austria.

Jim Segerstrom had twice won the prestigious Higgins and Langley Award, given by the Swiftwater Rescue Committee of the National Association for Search and Rescue, once for his lifetime achievement in the field.

Together with close friend Jim Lavally of Rescue Canada, Special Rescue Services provided not only technical expertise, planning and consulting services, but also training that meets and exceeds the requirements of the NFPA and the IRIA. The courses have been written by a group of the most noted experts in the field to be both performance-based and objectively tested, creating true "technicians" at their rescue crafts.

Author of the original SRT course texts, as well as texts on low to high angle rescue, helicopter rescue, and helicopter safety; founding member of the North American Helicopter Rescue Working Group; rescue instructor trainer; frequent contributor to rescue magazines, and speaker at national rescue and EMS conferences; US Editor for Technical Rescue magazine, member of the Advisory Board of Advanced Rescue Technology Magazine; risk management and emergency management consultant; flood response technical specialist; recognized legal expert witness; founding chair of the International Rescue Instructors Association, paramedic and flight paramedic for 17 years, and 25 year member of the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team, Jim Segerstrom had devoted himself almost entirely to his search and rescue educational career. *Edited by Sean Alladio*

TAKEN FROM *Technical Rescue* issue 49 TRIBUTE TO JIM SEGERSTROM

Our great friend Jim Segerstrom, the world's leading water rescue expert and Technical Rescue magazine's US editor died on February 5th 2007 in California after suffering a massive stroke during a bout of pneumonia. He leaves wife Shiree, son Christian and a world of devastated friends and colleagues. Jim Segerstrom was the world's most proactive, enthusiastic, knowledgeable and experienced proponent of swiftwater and flood rescue. He was a founder member of Tuolumne County Sheriff's Search & Rescue Team and served for many years as a Paramedic and Flight Paramedic, indeed his experience with helicopters led to development of helicopter rescue courses that are still the basis for most US agencies teaching today. Jim was recognised by his peers not least in being the first ever recipient of the Higgins & Langley Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding achievement in swiftwater in water rescue awarded by NASAR's water rescue committee.

Together with a select group of pioneers Jim was the first to recognise the need for a new approach to moving water rescue and to coin the term 'Swiftwater Rescue'. His passion for mitigating the increasing risks to emergency services posed by insufficient training and equipment in inland water rescue led to him founding Rescue3 International in 1979. Think about where your agency was in swiftwater rescue terms in 1979 and the chances are that many of you are only now starting to meet a standard that Jim was advocating almost 30 years ago! With Jim's help the US remained decades ahead of most of the rest of the world in swiftwater rescue but agencies in Japan, Australia, the Caribbean, UK, Fiji and 101 other countries soon began to benefit from Jim's relentless work ethic and air miles collection. After many years of throwing himself into anything that was even vaguely damp, Jim began to recognise the need to evolve his original ideas in order to cover the much greater risks associated with moving flood water in contrast to pure swiftwater. So he called it a day with Rescue3 (though he remained a major shareholder) and formed Special Rescue Services to deliver a new range of comprehensive water rescue training courses requiring relevant pre-qualification and dealing with all of the stages of flooding from awareness to the most advanced of swiftwater intervention. He had long been warning of the trend towards increased flooding and the need for ALL emergency services to be prepared, not simply the specialist teams. But for years his advice was dismissed by the less proactive agencies as scaremongering and unnecessary. And so, in the year of Jim's death, we continue to see fire service personnel entering moving water in bunker gear and fire helmets which will cause Jim no end of frustration, but the rest of you have this man to thank for the training and appropriate PPE that could one day save your life! In an industry full of 'experts' Jim stood out as a man with the knowledge, ideas and experience to truly be recognised as the father of modern swiftwater and flood rescue.



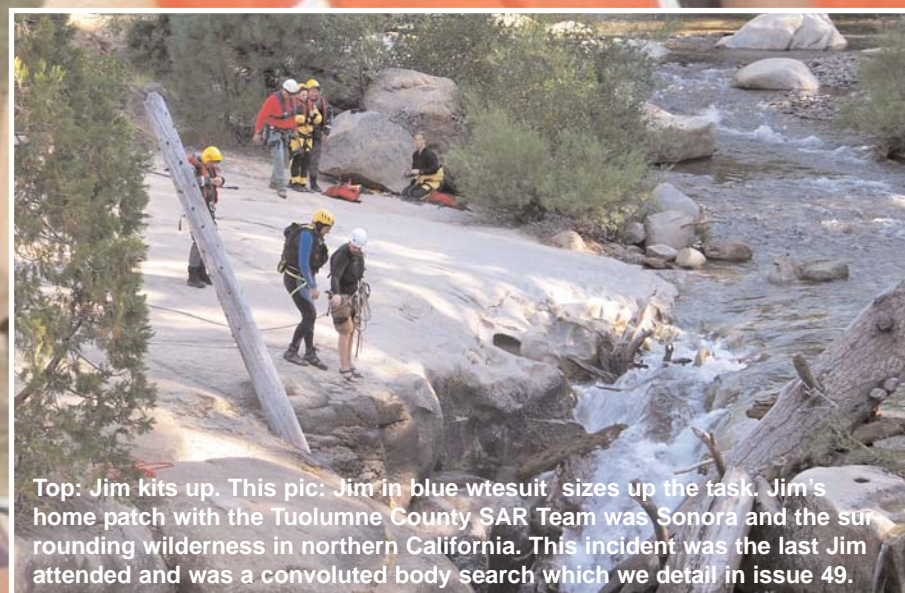
Jim's loss is not only a personal tragedy to many of us it has left the world a far less safe place. Without Jim's drive and commitment to directing the governing agencies and emerging water rescue teams towards appropriate training and equipment there will continue to be lessons learned the hard (and tragic) way. Such was Jim's drive and passion for safety that there will be some in the rescue world breathing a quiet sigh of relief at his untimely demise because he was a man passionate about doing things the right way and though frequently frustrated by inactivity and misdirected budgets was not shy in pointing out deficiencies caused by the political expediency that unfortunately pervades the upper echelons of fire and rescue services worldwide. I fervently hope that, far from forgetting about Jim's drive for water preparedness his death will galvanise the remaining under-equipped and under-trained agencies to direct their limited resources wisely - forget the new livery, golden handshakes and white elephant projects and gear up properly for the increase in flooding that Jim's been warning you about for decades!

Jim was a kindred spirit for all of us at Technical Rescue magazine, a Californian anglophile with great humility, enormous wit and humour with a presence that made him a giant amongst his contemporaries. I'd like to think that in the UK his expertise and pioneering of swiftwater and flood rescue would have been honoured many years ago with a knighthood for 'services to water rescue'. But while that particular honour eluded Jim in favour of many an overpaid singer or sportsman he still commands the respect of the entire Rescue world. The mere mention of his name should continue to cause some to shift uncomfortably in their seats, in their offices, safe from the cold reality of water knowing that Jim's warning about the dangers of poor quality training and equipment not meeting the increased risks of flooding continue to be proven correct - water was a medium that Jim knew intimately and was still enthusiastically throwing himself into at the age of 60

Technical Rescue magazine will continue to drive towards Jim's ultimate goal of a safer world for water rescuers and victims through appropriate training, techniques and equipment but we will never be quite the same magazine again and we as individuals will not be the same people we were with Jim by our sides. It was a privilege my friend. *Ade Scott*

JIM SEGERSTROM

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Top: Jim kits up. This pic: Jim in blue wetsuit sizes up the task. Jim's home patch with the Tuolumne County SAR Team was Sonora and the surrounding wilderness in northern California. This incident was the last Jim attended and was a convoluted body search which we detail in issue 49.

This was Jim in his element - enthusiastic Fijian whitewater rafters with absolutely no pre-conceptions or political allegiances listen to the master and then implement what they have learnt. Jim was justifiably proud of the work he did in the more remote regions of the world improving safety and efficiency of rescuer and victims alike. Most recently he had worked in Jamaica and Haiti.



Jim's favourite web-pic: he would send this to all and sundry with the strapline: 'Panic in Ireland as floodwaters rise'



Jims Memorial Service was held in his home town of Sonora, Ca. With state and National Flags draped and unfurled Washington Street, the main Sonora thoroughfare, was closed for Jims procession. This included vehicles from the Fire dept, Sheriff's dept and Rescue Team. It was an event attended by friends and colleagues from literally all corners of the globe with personal readings by brothers Donald, David, Steven and his sister Ann. Great friends Jim Lavally and TCSAR Team leader Barry Edwards also spoke and Jim was given an 'official' send-off with a 21-gun salute and a helicopter fly-past in the fallen comrades flight pattern. Jim is survived by wife Shiree and son Christian.



Above: Jim was a major driving force in the Higgins & Langley Awards and Swiftwater Challenge and is going to be a hard act to follow!!