

08-23-1995 Knoxville TN - Corey Berggren –Vol PSD – Deep – Gas Mix Accident



<https://www.kvers.org/>



<https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/firefighter-fatalities/fatalityData/detail?fatalityId=306>

Corey Berggren

On August 24, Rescue Diver Corey Berggren of the Knoxville Volunteer Rescue Squad died while conducting dive operations in a quarry to recover the body of a drowning victim. Diver Berggren had apparently breathed the wrong mixture of gas from his scuba tank during a 200 foot dive, asphyxiating him.

Department Information

Knoxville Volunteer Rescue Squad

512 Chilhowee Drive NE
Knoxville, Tennessee 37924
Chief: John Yu

Corey Berggren was honored on the [National Fallen Firefighters Memorial](#) in Emmitsburg, Maryland and was included in the USFA's annual report [Firefighter Fatalities in the United States](#).

Corey Berggren

Age:

Rank: Rescue Diver

Classification:

Incident Date: Aug 24, 1995

Date of Death: Aug 24, 1995

Cause of Death: Exposure

Nature of Death: Asphyxiation

Activity Type: Search and Rescue

Emergency Duty: Yes

Duty Type: Other On-Duty

Fixed Property Use: N/A

Honoree

Corey D Berggren

http://www.national-ems-memorial.org/honorees/entry/9/75/?sort=date_created&dir=DESC&pagenum=44

Biography

Corey was an active Special Services Member of the Knoxville Volunteer Emergency Rescue Squad's Water Rescue Team.

An experienced Dive Rescue Specialist, Corey held a dozen diving instructor certifications including Trimix, Assistant Cavern, DAN Oxygen, YMCA SLAM & Cavern, and EANX Cave Diver courses.

He was also interested in computers and combined computers with diving to produce software which allowed divers to create dive tables by using multiple gas changes. Unfortunately, Corey's death resulted from the first fatal accident in the history of the 39-year old Knoxville Squad.

His death was the result of breathing an inappropriate mixture of gas during a deep dive in a quarry to recover the body of a drowning victim.

After the accident, Corey was taken to the University of Tennessee Medical Center and placed in a hyperbaric chamber for decompression where he suffered a heart attack.

Corey died on August 24, 1995, at the age of 40 doing what he loved to do--help others. More than 40 rescue/EMS agencies were represented at Corey's funeral, which was interpreted in sign language for students of the Tennessee School for the Deaf where Corey had been employed for 20 years.

A rescue squad dive truck carried his body to the cemetery where a Lifestar emergency helicopter flew overhead in tribute. He was survived by his parents, Polly and Fred Berggren.

Corey was remembered by Dr. Jerry Seale, minister to the deaf at First Baptist Church of Knoxville: "He loved to dance. He loved to flirt. He loved to dive. He loved to live." **Honored 1996**

Firefighter Fatalities in the United States in 1995

http://sageauthoring.com/nfa/admin/ff_fat95.pdf

Incident 62 On August 24, Rescue Diver Corey Berggren of the Knoxville (TN) Volunteer Rescue Squad died while conducting dive operations in a quarry to recover the body of a drowning victim. Berggren had apparently breathed the wrong mixture of gas from his SCUBA tank during a 200 foot dive, asphyxiating him.

AUGUST 23, 1995 TENNESSEE

A 40 yoa volunteer dive team member and experienced diving instructor drowned during the recovery operation of a drowning victim in 212 feet of water in a local quarry. The diver had accidentally utilized a wrong set of dive tanks that were filled with 36% NITROX. After reaching the drowning victim and twenty seven minutes into the dive at maximum depth, the diver went into oxygen convulsions and drowned. The diver was recovered by his diving partner and the victim later recovered. Rescue efforts failed.

Emergency rescue workers celebrate vision of public service

<http://archive.knoxnews.com/news/local/emergency-rescue-workers-celebrate-vision-of-public-service-ep-411686335-359904551.html>

May 05, 2008 *By Matt Lakin*

Emergency Rescue Squad. The poster in his hand holds old newspaper clippings and photographs from that rescue.

[Minutes of the first meeting of the Knoxville Volunteer Emergency Rescue Squad, which celebrates its 50th anniversary May 10](#)

What: Knoxville Volunteer Emergency Rescue Squad's 50th anniversary celebration
Where: Jacob Building, Chilhowee Park (use Lakeside Street entrance off Magnolia Avenue)

When: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday

Admission: Free; donation of Gatorade suggested

More information: Call 865-546-4824

The Knoxville Volunteer Emergency Rescue Squad began with 10 men meeting in a garage more than 50 years ago.

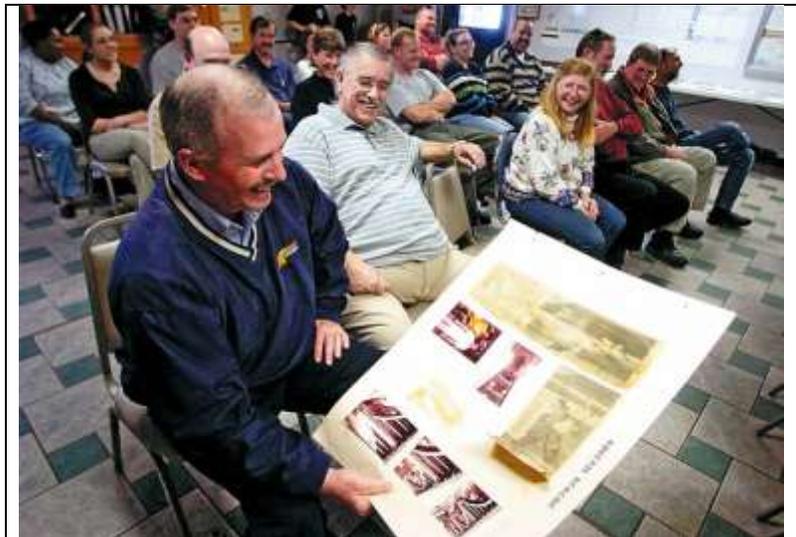
They'd barely recognize it now. The volunteer organization that started out as a handful of men in ties answering calls in a converted bread truck now encompasses 143 members - male and female - who answer more than 2,600 calls per year around East Tennessee.

"These gentlemen had a vision," said Leigh Ann Cate, the squad's executive director. "A good many of our members now are visionaries. A lot of them have started new programs and brought in new technology. It's all part of that same vision."

Members will celebrate that vision Saturday during an anniversary get-together at Chilhowee Park. They'll show off their equipment for the public, remember the founders and swap stories from more than half a century of volunteer service.

One thing hasn't changed - they still do it all for free.

"This one organization saves the county millions of dollars," said Walt Idol, a KVERS member for more than 30 years. "Nobody does it for the fabulous pay. At some level, these people derive some satisfaction for helping others."



Jeff Gregory brings the room to laughter as he retells the story of when he rescued a man from the Henley Bridge while he was a volunteer for the Knoxville Volunteer

"It's a baseline of people caring about people that carries from generation to generation. We see some of the best that people have to offer and some of the worst, and we work through it."

Born of tragedy

The story started Sept. 16, 1956, when 15-year-old Charles Edward Howard dived into the swift-moving waters of the Holston River in Strawberry Plains. He never came up.

Knox County had no organized rescue squad, and the search for the boy's body lasted for days until authorities called in members of the Greeneville Rescue Squad to help local volunteers.

Ten men met in Bill Dixon's garage on Rutledge Pike a month later to talk about forming a rescue squad. Willard Howard, the drowned boy's father, attended the first meeting. So did Frank Roach, whose grandson, Greg Sauceman, now answers calls as a squad member.

"It's kind of funny," Sauceman said. "I never realized he was a volunteer here until I told him about my coming here. Then he started telling me stories from the old days about dragging the river with hooks and cutting people out of wrecks with crowbars."

By the second meeting, the squad elected a slate of officers. First-aid training and the gathering of equipment followed.

The first fundraiser by the local Jaycees raised \$250, followed by a supper at the Arminda School that raised another \$225. By 1958, the squad had a charter, along with a boat bought from Rich's department store and a converted bread truck to answer calls.

The first members answered calls wearing hats, ties and snow-white "ice cream suits." That didn't make them squeamish about doing the dirty work. "Many days, one person went out on the truck and did it all," said James Acuff, who joined the squad later in the 1970s. "It was that way for years."

Changing times

Crowbars, fishhooks and converted bread trucks might have made up the starter kit, but rescue technology has seen vast changes since those early days.

The squad started using the jaws of life, now a staple of rescue efforts, in 1974. Bob Swabe, then an FBI agent, brought along the squad's first tracking dog, a bloodhound named J. Edgar, when he joined in the 1970s.

"That was the first rescue dog ever in this part of the country," he said. Early members of KVERS received basic training in first aid and learned other tactics on duty. Now the squad boasts an annual budget of \$335,000 and teams

that specialize in such tactics as cave rescue, water rescue, trench rescue, medical treatment, diving and support.

The squad has earned nationwide recognition for its efforts. Agencies around the country often call for help - whether a trench rescue in Chattanooga or relief efforts on the Gulf Coast in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Members give much of the credit for that progress and reputation to leaders such as Dr. Robert Lash, organizer of the University of Tennessee Medical Center's Lifestar helicopter program and a longtime member of the KVERS board of directors.

"They call here because they always have in the past, because we've always been able to get it done," said John Whited, a squad member for more than 20 years. "That's still true today."

Close calls

In 50 years, only one of the countless calls turned fatal for a KVERS member.

Corey Berggren, 40, died Aug. 23, 1995, after diving 200 feet down into a South Knoxville quarry in search of a drowning victim's body. A sudden change in the mixture of gases from his tanks sent him into a seizure and caused a heart attack.

Longtime squad members still fall silent at the mention of Berggren's name.

"He passed on doing what he loved the most," said John Yu, another member.

"We train continually because we want to make sure everybody goes home every day."

Some calls end up bringing new recruits. Kristie Cook joined after the squad helped recover the body of her 20-month-old son, Will Brown, who drowned when her estranged husband jumped from the South Knoxville Bridge on Christmas Day 2003 with the boy in his arms.

"So many people got up from their Christmas dinners or from unwrapping presents, and they were there," she said. "I can't ever describe how grateful I am to them."

The crews never know what the next call might bring, but they never hesitate to answer a page or walk out the door.

"We've left spouses stranded with meals," Yu said. "We've missed holidays.

That's not something you can buy. But we get very few people who stop to say, 'Thank you.' "

The sacrifice can be as difficult for family members as for the volunteers, but most learn to adjust.

"I personally feel like God gives people special gifts," said Cate, the KVERS executive director, whose husband, Eddie, serves as an assistant chief. "With my husband, I couldn't stand in the way of what God has given him. And when I think how he could make a difference in somebody's life, I figure I can't complain."

Teen's body, missing since '86, found Youth drowned in E. Knox quarry

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/8933.shtml>

May 12, 2000 [By Jamie Satterfield, News-Sentinel staff writer](#)

Nearly 14 years after a teenager drowned in an East Knox County quarry, his body has finally been found, authorities announced Thursday.

The remains of David Russell, who was 18 years old when he drowned in Immel Quarry, were discovered Saturday by two professional divers during a training session, according to the Knox County Sheriff's Department.

Detective Ed Young, who heads the Sheriff's Department's dive team, said the remains were lifted from the bottom of the 197-foot deep quarry Wednesday.

The discovery ended years of waiting and wondering by Russell's mother and a sense of defeat that had plagued both Sheriff's Department investigators and members of the Knoxville Volunteer Emergency Rescue Squad, Young said.

"This is the only case where we've never been able to recover a body we knew was there," he said. Russell's mother, Mary C. Russell, "has had all of this (pain) to bear for all these years. There would always be a question ... if you could not recover a loved one. This was very unusual."

It was on July 4, 1986, that David Russell went to the quarry, located near Mascot, with friends to swim. At the time, the quarry was still owned by a construction firm. Signs were posted around the quarry warning of the dangers that lurked below the water.

Young said those dangers included snakes, caves, cars and even a few submerged buildings that were slowly collapsing.

Russell and his friends swam across the quarry, which covers nine acres, to chat with a group of girls who had gathered at the edge of the water, Young said. As the group headed back to the opposite side, Russell "became in distress" and called out for help, Young said.

Using an air mattress, Russell's friends tried to rescue him, but Young said Russell "slipped under" the surface and seemed to disappear in the murky water.

The rescue squad spent the next 30 days conducting dive operations to try to find Russell's body. When unsuccessful, the operation was scaled back but continued "off and on for a total of five years," Young said.

At some point, the quarry was sold to a private landowner, and efforts to find Russell's body ended. Young said Lt. Larry Johnson, who was assigned to investigate the drowning, and rescue squad dive commander John Yu, who headed the many attempts to find Russell's body, were particularly haunted by the failure.

"John Yu was pretty emotional," Young said.

Although drowning victims often float to the surface of water over time, the depths of quarry waters and the debris scattered on the quarry floor often entomb drowning victims, he said.

"There really is no science as to when a body will float," Young said. "The probability is high that (Russell's body) would have never floated to the surface."

On Saturday, divers from Rheas Diving Services in Maryville, a firm specializing in deep-water expeditions, were using powerful "cave lights" to explore the lower depths of the quarry when the light reflected off a shiny object, Young said.

A closer examination revealed human remains still clad in a pair of bright red "coaches shorts" like the ones Russell had been wearing when he drowned, Young said. The divers used a floating marker to pinpoint the location and reported the discovery to detectives. Two days later, four Rheas divers, assisted by the Sheriff's Department's dive team and the rescue squad, descended to the quarry bottom again and videotaped the remains. A comparison of the shorts on the body convinced authorities the remains likely were Russell's, according to Young.

On Tuesday, Yu and Young went to visit Russell's mother to tell her the news and prepare her for the following day's diving expedition to recover the remains.

"She said she had a feeling the night before that something was wrong," Young said. "When we told her ... she was, of course, emotional but gratified. She was glad that (her son's death) was finally at a closure."

The expedition to recover the remains was a dangerous one, Young said. Young's dive partner died a few years ago in a similar mission at a quarry off Blount Avenue. Young said divers had to spend nearly an hour in the water going through a decompression procedure in which the divers rise only a few feet at a time to prevent a potentially fatal phenomenon known as the bends.

Once the remains were recovered and turned over to the University of Tennessee's forensic anthropology experts, a check of dental records confirmed it was Russell's body.

"We're gratified this is over as well," Young said. "This case has touched and affected many lives."

Deep Dive Pioneer –

<http://psai.com/history/>

One of the very first publically available table generating software programs, which allowed the use of nitrogen, oxygen and helium mixtures, was Dive Profile Analysis (DPA). Gary was good friends with the creator of this software, Corey Berggren, having known him many years from their association in the cave diving community. Corey based Bulhmann ZH-L16 algorithm. After discussing the use of the software with both Corey and several phone calls with Dr. Buhlmann, Gary had an understanding of how best to use this program to produce Trimix Dive Tables for more extreme depth altitude diving projects the U.S. Deep Diving Team was ready to take on. The team became the first to use Dive Profile Analysis (DPA), within a few weeks of its 1992 release modified fashion, based on Corey's and Bulhmann's input, to generate tables for the use of Trimix at altitude and actually dive them.