

# THE LONG ROAD TO LHOTSE

**JIM MORRISON HAS EXPERIENCED THE HEIGHTS OF SUCCESS AS A SKIER AND LUXURY HOME BUILDER IN TAHOE, BUT IT WAS THE PERSEVERANCE TO COME BACK FROM UNIMAGINABLE TRAGEDY THAT LED HIM TO ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT SKI DESCENTS**

Written by David Bunker

**AT** nearly the cruising altitude of a transcontinental jetliner, Jim Morrison clicked into his skis and peered down a sheer panel of Himalayan snow. One of the world's most coveted ski lines lay below him—a precipitous couloir that split the face of Lhotse, the fourth highest mountain in the world. Below, the rock-walled ribbon of snow fell away for thousands of feet before opening up into the formidable glacial ice and snow of the Lhotse Face.

The 12-hour climb was behind him and his partner. It was September 30 at 2:22 p.m. No other teams were on the mountain. A slight wind kicked up, stirring the minus-15-degree air.

Morrison, a longtime Tahoe resident and successful luxury home builder, breathed into his oxygen mask and committed to his first turn—the first from the summit of Lhotse ever. The right-hand slash down the ultra-steep summit block sent sugary snow cascading down the couloir with Mt. Everest in full focus just to his right.

“I made a couple really controlled turns with the snow falling away and then basically pointed it over a small cliff and crashed into the snow and self-arrested,” says Morrison, seated at a counter in his lakefront home in Tahoe City.

Jim Morrison finds soft Sierra snow high above Emerald Bay, photo by Ming Poon