



# Raider Tales

Stories of Courage & Valor

The combat Marines of "E" Co. 2nd Bn, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division

Volume 1, Issue 2

Fall 2022

## Inside:

- **Purple Hearts**  
Echo was awarded many..... 2
- **Decorations**  
Bronze Star, Silver Star, Navy Cross? .....2
- **Never Forgotten**  
The story of LCpl Albert Brigham..... 3
- **Tragedy at LZ Crow**  
Echo chopper down..... 4
- **Combat Stories**  
1st Person Accounts..... 6
- **Family News**  
Seeking news about Echo families ..... 6
- **Capt. Pratt and the Wounded Nong Phu**..... 7
- **A Christmas Tale of a Chi -Com .50** ..... 8
- **The Chiêu Hồi We Knew**..... 10
- **Colorado High Country Echo** . ..... 12

## South Carolina

# The Seasons Change



Lt. Marshall Croy  
Platoon Commander  
2nd Platoon

Greetings to all Echo Raiders. I hope your summer has gone well. While we still have hot days where I am in South Carolina, it is clearly Fall. The humidity is much lower, the angle of the sun is clearly lower and now we get days that actually feel “cool”. Some of the oaks are dropping their acorns and on the back roads one begins to see swirls of dry leaves blown across the road.



See **Tragedy at LZ Crow**, pages 4-5.

### Reunion 2023

It is not too early to be making plans to joins us in Prescott Valley, AZ, the first week of May 2023. It will be here before you know it. Please make every effort to be there.

### National POW/ MIA Recognition Day

National POW/ MIA Recognition Day is the 3d Friday in September. This year it was observed on 16 September.

This is the day when we honor those who were **Prisoners of War** and those who are still **Missing in Action**. As of March, 2021, the Department of Defense reported **1,584 Amer-**

**icans** are still unaccounted for in Southeast Asia. One of our own, **LCpl Albert Brigham**, is listed as **KIA, Body Not Recovered**. “**Never Forgotten**”, regarding **LCpl Brigham**, is posted on the **Wall of Faces** website hosted by the **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund**.

*Continued p. 3*

# Purple Hearts

Many were wounded while participating in the amazing exploits of Echo Co. If you received the Purple Heart and would like us to write up your story about what it was like to get hit, the circumstances involved, and the recovery period, let us know. We'll publish your story along with your photo in the Raider Tales newsletter.

[tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com) • (352) 999-1576



# Decorations

Awards for heroism are deeply personal. Quite a few Echo Co Raiders were decorated.

If you received the Bronze Star, Silver Star, or Navy Cross, and would like to share your story, please let us know. We'll publish your citation along with your story and photo in the Raider Tales newsletter.

[tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com)  
(352) 999-1576



**Lt. Marshall Croy**  
*Plt Commander,  
2nd Platoon*

Posted on the **Wall of Faces** website  
February 10, 2018  
by **Rebecca**  
<https://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces/>

On the evening of 14 December, 1966, Echo Company moved from their ambush site to the south bank of the **Song La Tho River**.

**LCpl. Brigham** and his team were located upstream from **PFC Cummings'** team. The rest of the platoon dug in some 500 yards away. An hour later LCpl. Brigham's squad opened fire on a **Viet Cong** element moving along the opposite riverbank. The squad leader was sending two men across the river to check the bodies.

PFC Cummings watched A.B. Brigham and (a Marine nicknamed) Poncho preparing to cross the muddy river. LCpl. Brigham entered the water upstream from PFC Cummings' squad with Poncho right behind him. As the two Marines swam across the fast moving river,

# Never Forgotten

the Americans heard an enemy AK-47 rifle go off. The VC had

him downstream.

Over the next several minutes,

PFC Cummings swam as hard as he could with the current to reach A.B. Brigham. He swam to the middle of the river and dove under to try to locate him there, but again found nothing.

Over the next several hours, the five Marines continued to examine the **Song La Tho River** from the point where LCpl. Brigham disappeared for a distance of at least 500 meters downstream.

The entire search operation continued until just before dusk.

At the time the formal search was terminated, A.B. Brigham was reported as "**Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered.**"

On **The Wall**, LCpl Brigham is honored at **Panel 13E, Line 42**. He was from **Savannah, GA**. There is a stone placed in his memory in the **Laurel Grove Cemetery, Savannah, GA**.

— **REBECCA**

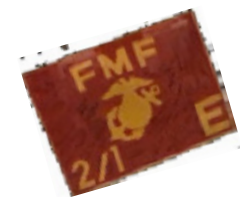


**L/Cpl Albert Brigham**

come back for their dead.

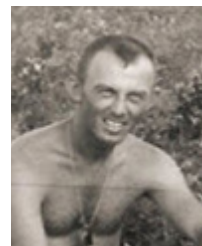
As he watched his friends' progress, he appeared to be struggling to keep afloat when his head went under water, then popped up again as the river's current began to pull





*First Person Account: Operation Hastings*

# Tragedy at LZ Crow



**Sgt Jim Bathurst**  
Platoon Commander  
2nd Platoon

Our entry into **Operation Hastings** itself, after spending several weeks as a lone rifle company in the **Dong Ha**

and **Cam Lo** areas, was on 15 July 1966. The date will live forever in my mind.

I had never witnessed so many helos assembled in one location—an array of approximately 30 of varied assortment: the older Korean War vintage **UH-34s** and **UH-37s**, and the newer **CH-46s** and **Huey gunships (UH-1E)**. It appeared our entire battalion was going in on one lift.

Echo was first in at **LZ Crow** and we were the lead platoon. We organized into helo teams based on what we were told each type of helo would carry. However, as always, men were pulled off the end of teams as individual pilots had their own damn standards, so much for unit integrity!

My team boarded the flight leader's bird, one of the old **UH-37** models, a large single-rotor helo from the Korean War, and so worn out you could actually see the ground between the decking. Destination was **LZ Crow**.



**Photo taken by a war correspondent on the ground at LZ Crow. It made the cover of Time magazine.**

Our mission was to reinforce a Marine battalion already there. Good, I thought, it meant a "cold" landing zone.

The trip went as usual; however, as we began our descent into the LZ, the Marine across from me was suddenly startled by some-

thing. His eyes opened wide, and his mouth dropped as though he had just seen a ghost.

I turned, looked out the nearest window, and saw a **CH-46** helo trailing smoke heading for the ground. I heard our engines and rotors accelerate as we regained altitude. I got up and moved around looking out the windows, attempting to better observe the damaged helo. The crew chief shouted in my ear, "A bird's been hit, and it crashed!"

We hovered at a safe altitude for what seemed like an eternity until the crew chief informed me we were returning to **Dong Ha**.

The transit back to the base was not at all pleasant. Since I was in the lead helo, I feared it could be one of the helos carrying a squad



**"Our Platoon Sergeant"**  
**Platoon Sgt Herolin Simmons, along with 11 Marines and one Corpsman, gave their lives for their country when their helicopter was shot down on Operation Hastings**

from our platoon. My mind conjured up all sorts of thoughts: Why didn't we land to help? Are we just going to leave without any attempt to rescue them?

We landed back at **Dong Ha** and began the ghastly task of counting heads. It seemed to take forever to determine who the hell was on that bird because of having to drop men off helo teams when loading. Long before the final determination was made, I knew it was one of my helos. I could not locate my platoon sergeant or my second squad. I was distraught, absolutely destroyed emotionally.

In one fell swoop we lost ten brothers including **Sgt Herolin T. Simmons**—a fearless, professional Marine and a great platoon ser-



**North Vietnamese anti-aircraft battery with supporting infantry**

geant—as well as our entire second squad, and our Doc. Maybe, just maybe some survived. I prayed. We spent the day reorganizing

within the company. Our platoon was provided with Marines from the other platoons so we could still maintain three functional squads, and we were assigned another Doc from battalion.

**Capt Larsen** briefed the platoon commanders that evening that we were going to try it again the next morning. He also told us there were no survivors. The helo was believed to be hit with .50 caliber fire from far outside the LZ.

Thirteen dead in one short span of minutes—ten from our platoon! I am sure none of our Marines slept that night. I know I didn't. Such a loss for a leader is near impossible to get past, but I had

to move beyond it—if I could. I prayed for help.

— **Colonel Jim Bathurst USMC (ret)**



1st Person Accounts

# Combat Stories

Send in your combat stories. Email them, text them, dictate them. Remembering the exploits of Echo Co — the hair-raising close calls, the brushes with death, the ass-kicking we gave the Viet Cong and NVA — it would be a shame not to record for posterity the things we saw as young men in Vietnam.

All combat stories are welcome. First person accounts of fire fights and booby traps make them come alive. Ambush descriptions, ours and theirs, have great value. Multiple first person accounts shine light on long ago complex events.

Send them in. We'll publish them in **Raider Tales** for the Echo membership to view, discuss, and contribute to. Email/text combat stories to:

[tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com) • (352) 999-1576



Member News

# Seeking Family News

The most important goal of the **Raider Tales** newsletter is to keep track of Echo Co. members and their families. Vacations, wedding anniversaries, family milestones, grandchildren — these are the things we want to hear about.

Send or text your photos to:

[tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:tdunne3@tampabay.rr.com) • (352) 999-1576

First Person Account

# Capt. Pratt and the Wounded Nông Phu



**L/CPL Rick Lindsey**  
Battery B, 1st Bn,  
11th Marines,  
Artillery Forward  
Observer (FO)  
attached to Echo 2/1

everybody in the company knew exactly where we were going, the objectives of the operation, where

Our company commander, Capt. Pratt, was an exceptional officer who made sure that

lage in the middle of yet another smoldering hot, humid day.

We stopped to eat our C-Rations and the Skipper noticed an older farmer with one arm, struggling to plow his field behind a water buffalo. The house next to us had one corner on the ground and the farmer's wound looked fresh.



to go if they got separated from the company, etc., etc. He was a really fine leader and he conveyed a sincere concern for us and the Vietnamese. I stuck close to him and whenever he wanted a fire mission, I was right next to him to call it in.

One of my favorite memories of Capt. Pratt was when we were doing a company sweep through an almost completely deserted vil-

what happened. We went out to talk to him, and he told us that an artillery round had hit next to the corner of this house, killing his wife and taking off the lower part of his

arm.

I asked him whose artillery round did it and he looked at me and said, "Does it make any difference?"

I reported what the farmer had said. Capt. Pratt lowered his head and said, "I hate this war" and then called for the three platoon commanders to come in. He told them: "1st Platoon, you have security — nobody comes in or around this farm. 2nd Platoon, you're going to plow a field and 3rd Platoon, we're rebuilding a house."

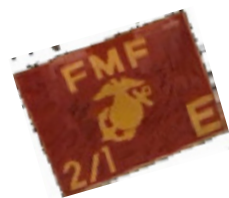
Capt. Pratt sent me and our Chiêu Hôi named Dau to ask



Capt. Pratt was one of the finest officers I ever knew.

— **Lieutenant Colonel Rick Lindsey, USMC (ret)**

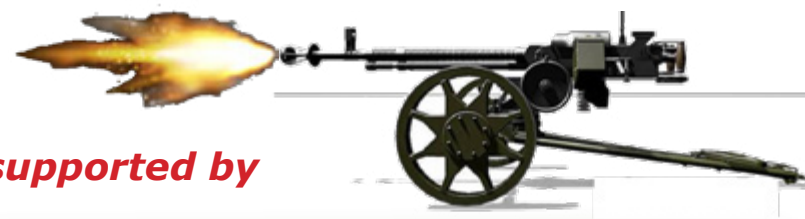




First Person Account

# A Christmas Tale of a Chi-Com 50

**Hidden in the ville's treeline, a Viet Cong platoon supported by one, maybe two heavy machine guns**



**What Echo Faced**  
 The Soviet made 12.7 mm DShK Heavy Machine Gun, was what we called the Chi-Com 50. It penetrates 15mm armor at 500 meters and is fed by a 50-round belt stowed in magazines.



**Cpl Terry Dunne**  
 Machine Gun Squad Leader  
 1st Platoon Echo 2/1

It was late Fall, near Christmas, and the Echo Raiders were pinned down behind a rice paddy dike by a Viet Cong heavy machine gun.

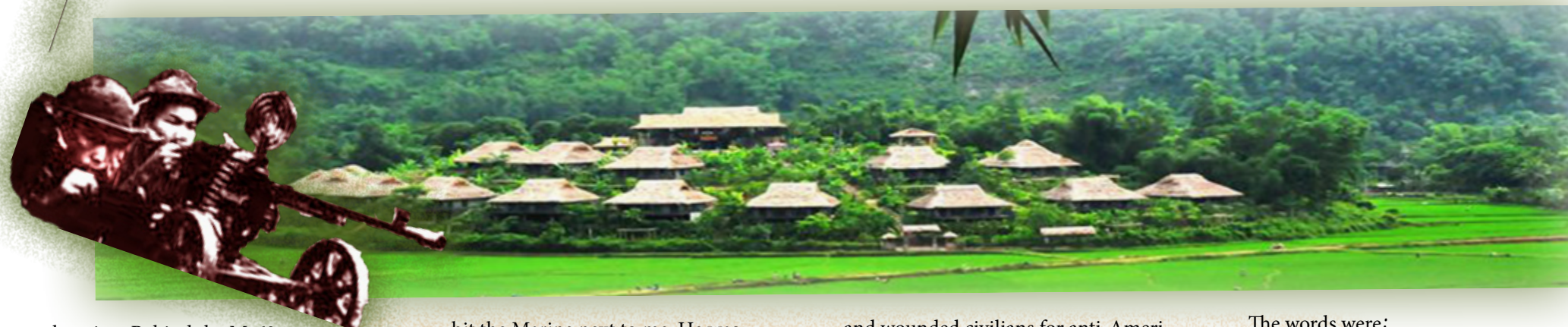
We'd been walking up this dark spooky trail, a bamboo-tunnel

kind of trail when — kapow — a big booby trap, maybe a mortar round or a 105 artillery shell, took the life of a young Echo PFC. As we medevaced his body, random bullets aimed at us tore through the left side of the bamboo tunnel.

The radio crackled...“Shift Left.” We turned left and poked out of the bamboo tunnel single file to the open rice paddies. Zing-zing-zing...more bullets, a lot more. We ducked low, running our way to cover behind a good-sized rice paddy dike.

The Viet Cong had deployed a Chinese communist .50 caliber machine gun, what we called a **Chi-Com 50**, and it was talking big time. I looked down the line at Echo Company laying low behind the paddy dike, the Chi-Com 50's fearsome bullets tearing the dike apart. It was sickening. Stick your head up and you were dead, simple as that.

Suddenly things changed. You could feel it down the line. The radio crackled, “Guns up” and six M-60 machine guns nosed over the dike, opening up on the **Chi-Com .50**. The M-60's red tracers quickly pinpointed the big gun's



location. Behind the M-60s, an Echo mortar team smashed a **60mm mortar** baseplate to the ground, attached the mortar tube, connected the bipod and sight, and fired off a high explosive round in all of about 30 seconds. Soon, all three Echo mortar teams were blasting the far tree line to rubble.

In the middle of it all, in the middle of the Echo line, Captain Thomas M. Pratt

III and his radioman stood up. The Captain—hand on his hip, radio mike

to his ear, a touch of swagger—ordered his rifle company into action. His radioman bobbed and weaved frantically, ducking the enemy bullets aimed at the Captain.

We all saw it. We were deeply moved but, much more, we understood. Capt. Pratt was going for the jugular.

The radio crackled...“Up” and 80-or-so U.S. Marines rose up each side of Capt. Pratt. The radio crackled once more, “Charge.”

We went over the dike. An enemy bullet

hit the Marine next to me. He was carrying two machine gun belts Pancho Villa-style and the enemy bullet harmlessly detonated one of the rounds close to his neck. He kept it as a close-call souvenir.

Echo's middle platoon formed a fighting wedge, the remaining platoons on each side in frontal assault mode, staying abreast laterally to avoid shooting each other. We charged over the rice paddies, an entire rifle company of crack-shot Marines firing from the hip. As we closed on the tree line, the enemy fire ceased, the **Viet Cong** shooters long gone along with the **Chi-Com 50**. We couldn't help but notice more than one dead or dying innocent civilian who'd been caught up in the fusillade aimed at the VC. But that was the way the VC operated. Attack from a well-populated village then use the dead

and wounded civilians for anti-American propaganda.

A few weeks later, on **Christmas Eve**, it was raining buckets and Echo Co was turning up a drink or two, safe inside 2/1's battalion perimeter. Some 30 or 40 Raiders

decided to go Christmas caroling and gathered in the rainy dark outside Capt. Pratt's hooch.

It began to rain even harder as the Skipper came out smiling, joining in the caroling.

The words were:

*“On the 1st day of Christmas the VC gave to me, a sniper on the Echo CP (see sidebar for more verses).”*

It went on and on and then a soaking-wet tipsy Marine held his beer up high

and yelled: “Here's to Capt. Pratt!”

And out of the steaming gushing river of rain came a roar:

**“To Capt. Pratt! Merry Christmas!”**



**Bamboo Tunnel**

**Echo's 12 Days of Christmas**

*On the 1st day of Christmas, The VC gave to me, A SNIPER ON THE ECHO CP*

*On the 2nd day of Christmas, The VC gave to me, Two Bouncing Bettys, AND A SNIPER ON THE ECHO CP*

*On the 3rd day of Christmas, The VC gave to me, Three Claymore Mines, AND A SNIPER ON THE ECHO CP*

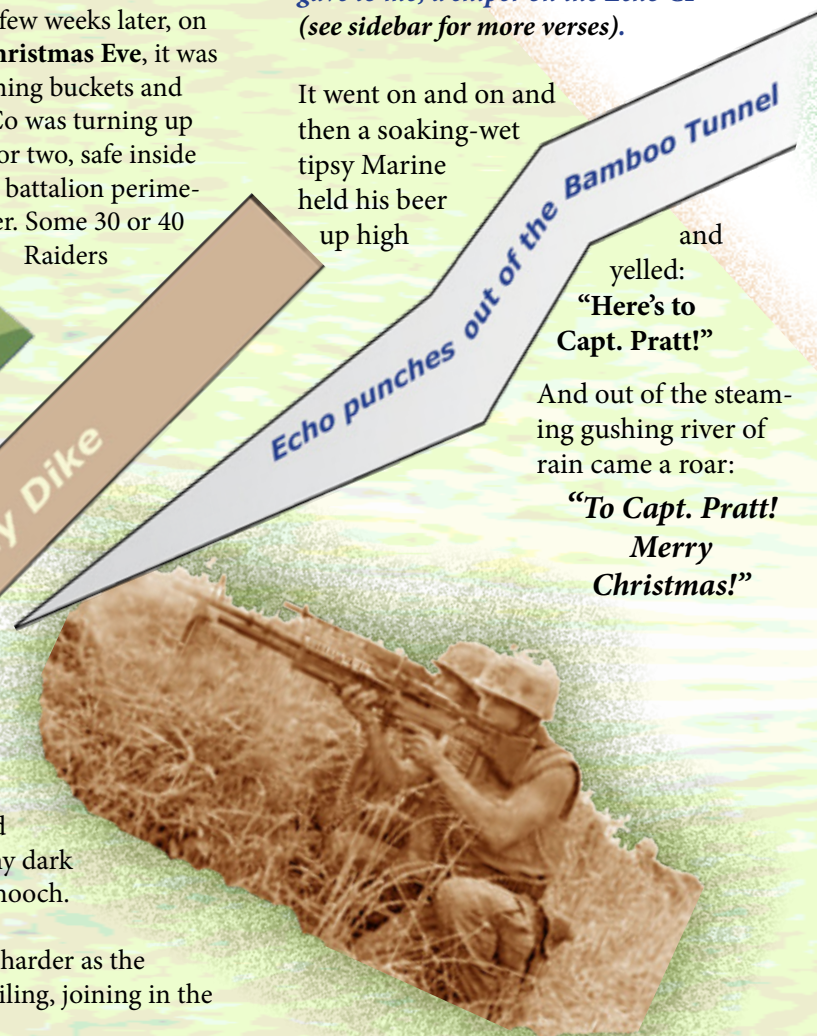
*On the 4th day of Christmas, The VC gave to me, Four 6-foot Mantraps, AND A SNIPER ON THE ECHO CP*

*On the 5th day of Christmas, The VC gave to me, Five Punji Sticks, AND A SNIPER ON THE ECHO CP*

*On the 6th day of Christmas, The VC gave to me, Six Bamboo Whip Traps, AND A SNIPER ON THE ECHO CP*

**...and the rest was lost in the drenching rain.**

*We all saw it. We were deeply moved but, much more, we understood. Capt. Pratt was going for the jugular.*





First Person Account



# The Chiêu Hồi We Knew



**Cpl Bob Lindgren**  
**S-2 Battalion**  
**Scout**  
**Vietnamese**  
**Language**  
**Trained**

After consideration, I've decided not to reveal the names of those Vietnamese in the photo as some of them may still be alive and subject to retribution.

As far as the gentleman to my right, I was told by a worker at Danang's **Furama Resort** in 1989 that he was beheaded.

As far as the man to my left, we used to dig up booby traps on the **Military Service Road (MSR)** trail when we were on patrol after our point man would find **Surprise Firing Devices (SFDs)** using a probe stick. Being former VC, he used to place them before joining us as a scout. He'd go out there, lit cigar in his mouth and pull them out of the ground by the two wires attached to the cardboard pieces that, when stepped-on, would complete the circuit to activate the blasting cap.

He'd pull that sucker out of the ground, cigar still burning in his mouth, stand up and show it off to us with a "shit eating grin" on his face.

No names. I don't want to risk the lives of anyone that might still exist.



**I'm in the middle with two former VC flipping me the bird. They were executed after we left country. The other Marine is Sgt. Van W. Martin, passed away over 20 years ago. All Vietnamese pictured were Chiêu Hồi, former Viet Cong.**



**Safe Conduct Pass**

## The Chiêu Hồi Program

Viet Cong defection was urged by means of a propaganda campaign, usually leaflets delivered by artillery shell or dropped over enemy-controlled areas by aircraft, or messages broadcast over areas of South Vietnam. A number of incentives were offered to those who chose to cooperate, along with psychological warfare to break enemy morale.

To further this aim, invitations to defect, which also acted as **Safe Conduct Passes**, were printed on clear plastic waterproof bags used to carry ammunition for the US soldiers' M-16 assault rifles.

Each bag held one M-16 magazine and was sealed to prevent moisture from the jungle's humid climate damaging the contents.

When the magazine was needed during a firefight with the ene-



**A romantic plea to the Viet Cong, "My darling, why do you want me to miss you? And cash rewards for turned-in Viet Cong weapons."**



**Cpl Bob Lindgren and S-2 Scout "Huy" (Former VC) at battalion inspection, Cau Ha Combat Base, south of Marble Mountain.**

my, the bag would be torn open and discarded, in the hope that it



would later be discovered by enemy troops who would read the text and consider defection.

By 1967, approximately 75,000 defections had been recorded, but analysts speculate that less than 25% of those were genuine.

The program had some difficulty catching on, due in part to culture gap—errors, such as misspellings and unintentionally offensive statements—and worsened by communist reprisals against defectors and their families.

To make matters worse, as testified by Sergeant Scott Camil during the **1971 Winter Soldier Investigation**, the passes were sometimes ignored by U.S. forces, and their holders shot while surrendering.

Overall, however, the Chiêu Hồi program was considered successful.

**- Bob Lindgren**



# Colorado High Country Echo



*Skip & Kandi Melendez  
in Aspen*



*Inna & Richard Panichi  
in Snowmass*



*Echo Three in Aspen*



*Donovan & Gaynell  
in Aspen*