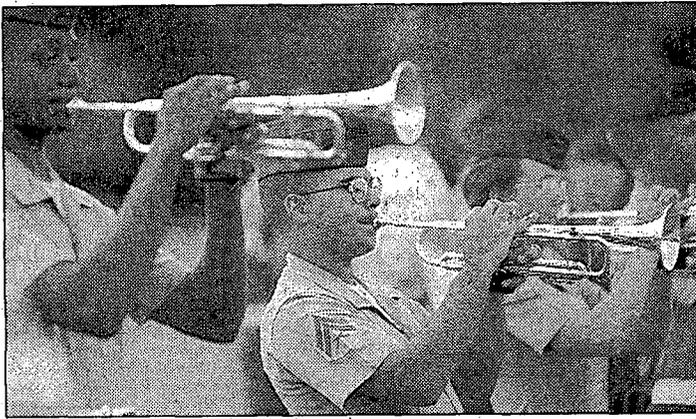


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8/1/2006  
TRIBUNE



# Marine Corps battles weather at ceremony

## Highwood-based group welcomes new commander

By Meg Murphy  
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

At 11 a.m. Sunday, right on schedule, the change-of-command ceremony began for the men and women of Marine Air Control Group 48 at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center.

What wasn't scheduled was a fierce, 10-minute downpour that started at virtually the same time and left the roughly 200 Marines soaked to the skin, yet still standing at attention, on the parade grounds of Ross Field.

A band made up of Marines brought in from the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C., for the occasion had to compete with thunder as they played martial music that has been a tradition at such events for generations.

None of the active duty and reserve troops who passed in review of the officers, batted an eyelash during the summer storm, which dissipated as quickly as it arrived.

Just another day at the office, when you're a part of the corps.

Some of those that carried ceremonial swords, also a bow to tradition, jokingly described the elaborate weapons of long ago as potential lightning rods.

Tradition, as upheld by the rhythmic marches and crisp salutes at a ceremony like the one held Sunday, is important to the service men and women, the participants said.

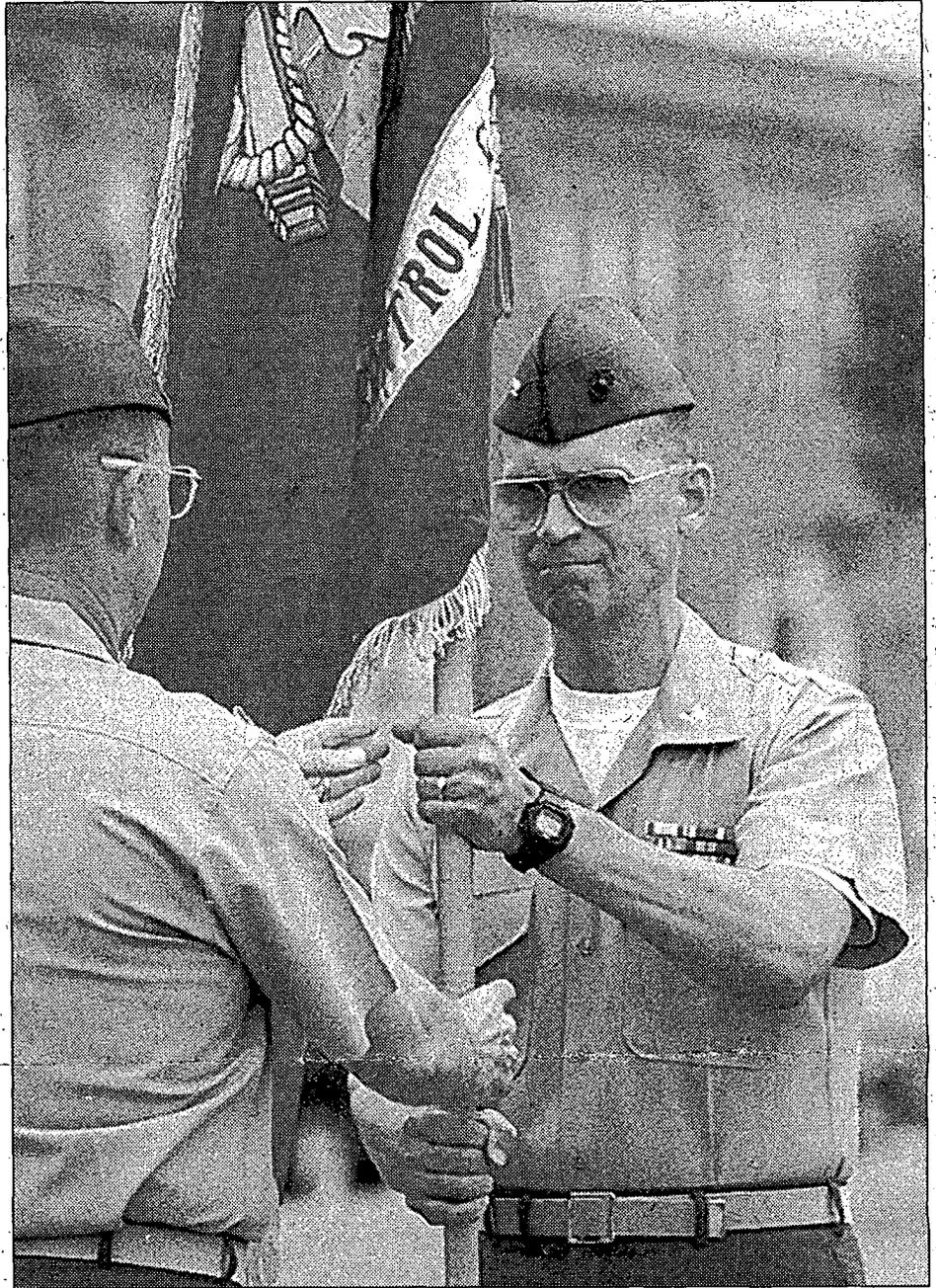
"It's kind of a send-off for the outgoing commanding officer and kind of a chance to show your mettle for the incoming commanding officer. We showed a little of that today," said Maj. Glenn Gerichten.

Marine Air Control Group 48 provides command and control for Marine aviation, specializing in close-air support, air traffic control, air defense control and radio communications.

It is responsible for the training of seven squadrons and battalions of reservists. The group also coordinates the air command and control system of the 4th Marine Aircraft Wing, which comprises a dozen sites in nine states.

On Sunday, it was Col. Michael Henderson's turn to transfer the responsibility for the group to Col. James Kratsas.

"When it's wartime, it doesn't matter what the weather is. It's not easy to hold a weapon when it's wet, but [the soldiers] are well-trained and disciplined," said Henderson, who is bound for a post as the deputy commander at the Naval Space Command in Virginia.



Tribune photos by Walter Kale

A Marine Corps band plays (top) as Col. Michael Henderson (above, left) presents Marine Air Control Group 48's colors to Col. James Kratsas.

### 'The Marine Corps, we think, is a family.'

Col. Michael Henderson

Henderson served as the commanding officer of Marine Air Control Group 48 since August 1995. It has been a tumultuous time for corps members here, marked by the closing of their previous home base, Glenview Naval Air Station.

The control group now calls the Philip H. Sheridan Reserve Center in Highwood its headquarters, although it includes about 2,000 active duty and

reserve Marines at 12 sites across the country.

Locally, about 300 Marines use the Sheridan Reserve Center as their base.

Henderson said he was proud of community outreach programs that send Marines to area schools to tell youngsters of possible opportunities that the corps can provide.

"The Marine Corps, we think, is a family," Henderson said.

As he took the reins of the group, Kratsas asked the service personnel and guests for "your continued support for our very important mission . . . of serving and protecting this great nation of ours."