

MACS-2 mustang retires after 31 years of service

LCPL. JASON MORRIS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After starting his career as an enlisted Marine, LtCol. Stephen G. Harris, Marine Air Control Squadron 2 commanding officer, brings his career to an end.

Harris enlisted in the Marine Corps in March 1971 to fight in the Vietnam War.

"It was a tradition in my family to be in the Marine Corps," said Harris, a native of Bend, Ore. "My father was a Marine in the Okinawa (Japan) Campaign during World War II and my great uncle was also a Marine and was killed in Korea. I thought I would follow along in their footsteps and join the Marine Corps during Vietnam.

"When I joined, however, they were starting to bring the troops back home," said Harris. "I thought I would have a chance at being sent over there if I was in the aviation field. We were still flying missions over Vietnam while the ground troops were being pulled out."

Harris never saw Vietnam because after finishing air traffic control school at Naval Air Station Glyco, Ga., he reported to Cherry Point March 1972, for duty as an air traffic controller.

In 1974, Harris was accepted to attend the Marine Corps Associ-

ate Degree Program at Coastal Carolina Community College and, upon graduation, he was reassigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron at Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C.

"I worked in the ATC field for several years before I went into the active reserves," said Harris. "After that, I continued to study in an undergraduate course at the University of Nevada in Los Angeles. While I was studying, I was working for the (Federal Aviation Administration) while waiting for approval to enter the Officer Commis-

sioning Program.

"My time with the FAA was an epiphany for me," said Harris. "It let me know the Marine Corps was where I wanted to be. I didn't feel right in the civilian world. I felt like I was missing something and I wanted back into the Marine Corps.

"I wanted to come back in as an officer, as well, because I saw some things during my enlisted years that I wanted to change and I needed to be an officer to do it," continued Harris. "I've been able to make those changes, since I have gone from humble beginnings to a great position in

charge of a squadron."

Harris started his career as a mustang at Marine Air Traffic Control Squadron 38 at MCAS El Toro, Calif., in October 1983. He moved around the Marine Corps working in air traffic control towers around the world, including Korea during Exercise Team Spirit '85.

When he was not working in the towers, Harris was improving himself with civilian and military college courses. He was assigned as the executive officer of Marine Wing Control Squadron 38 before attending the Air Force Command and Staff College in June

1995.

In April 2000, Harris placed in command of MACS-2.

"I really appreciate the honor and distinction of being a commanding officer and mustang in the Marine Corps," said Harris. "It has been a fruitful career for me and I'm going to miss it. I've been planning (retirement) for five years now and I can't think of a better way to cap off a career in the Marine Corps than in charge of a unit."

Harris will relinquish command of MACS-2 Dec. 7.



Official Marine Corps photo. LtCol. Stephen G. Harris, Marine Air Control Squadron 2 commanding officer (right), will relinquish command of MACS-2 Dec. 7 after 31 years of officer and enlisted service. LtCol. Laura Muhlenberg steps in as the new commanding officer.