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Mayport Remembers USS Stark

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Twenty-one years after an Iraqi missile struck guided missile frigate USS Stark (FFG 31) on patrol in the Arabian Gulf, former crewmembers and families attended the annual memorial ceremony held aboard Naval Station Mayport May 17 to honor the 37 fallen Sailors.

Among those attendees was guest speaker retired Adm. Harry G. Ulrich, former commanding officer USS Stark. During his speech, he reminded everyone of why they came together again under the shade of the oaks at Mayport's Memorial Park - to commemorate and commiserate.

"It is right and just that we reflect on the 37 fallen heroes whose memorial is set before us today. These were ordinary men in ordinary times. They chose to serve. They did not choose to become exceptional, they did not choose to become heroes," said Ulrich. "It was their fate, and it must be remembered. That it is our fate to continue to ensure that our country remains worthy of these men."

Following the opening remarks from Ulrich, retired Capt. Pete Wynkoop, also a former commanding officer of USS Stark, read the names of each crewmember as the tolling of USS Stark's bell rang throughout the park followed by the laying of the wreath.



-Photo by MC1 Toiete Jackson

Former Commanding Officer, guided-missile frigate USS Stark (FFG-31) retired Adm. Harry G. Ulrich prepares to lay the wreath in memory of the fallen heroes of the Stark with Barbara Kiser, wife of fallen Sailor Senior Chief Electrician's Mate Stephen Kiser, during the 21st Annual Memorial Service aboard Naval Station Mayport. Several members of the 1987 crew of the Stark and the families came to honor the 37 Sailors who were killed while on patrol in the Persian Gulf.

The ceremony offered a time to remember the fallen shipmates and rekindle old friendships, said former crewmember retired Capt. Matthew Schellhorn. Others find it comforting to remember their loved ones with those who have the same experience.

"I think it is very important to carry on the memory of those that were killed in the attack because some people don't even remember the Stark," said former crewmember retired Senior Chief Operation Specialist Larence 'Clyde' Barrow. "It's good for the families and it's

good for us to come here every year because there are not a lot of people that experience what we went through and it's good to be able to talk about it with others and to see how they are all getting along. It's therapeutic."

The ceremony ended with a

21-gun salute and the playing of taps to honor those that did not come home.

Former crewmembers were pleased at the outcome to know that people have not forgotten the sacrifices less their valor and look forward to the next May 17 gathering.