



PRESERVATION

◀ Historical society lists endangered properties PAGE B-4

STATE NEWS

Physical education becomes law PAGE B-6

B

FRIDAY

MAY 18, 2007

THE TIMES-UNION **

Memories of Stark linger

Some still struggle, 20 years later, with the pain of losing 37 sailors.

By JEFF BRUMLEY
The Times-Union

It was bear hugs and tears all around at Mayport Naval Station on Thursday when survivors of the USS Stark gathered with close to 200 others to mark the two decades since the Persian Gulf missile attack that killed 37 of their shipmates.

The fact that it was 20 years to the day that an Iraqi fighter jet launched two anti-ship missiles at the Jacksonville-based frigate

made the memorial service more meaningful than previous observances, several former Stark sailors said.

"Twenty years makes it more like a reunion," said Lawrence "Clyde" Barrow, a Stark survivor who lives in Jacksonville. "Twenty years is significant because an entire generation has passed since then."

Barrow and about 20 of his former shipmates attended the ceremony, as did other current and

STARK continues on B-3



USS Stark shipmates Bill Morandi (left) of Winter Park and Bernard Martin embrace before a memorial service marking the 20th anniversary of an attack on the ship that took the lives of 37 crew members.

BRUCE LIPSKY/
The Times-Union

The Times-Union

METRO



Photos by BRUCE LIPSKY/
The Times-Union

Left: Vernon Foster II (left) greets retired Vice Admiral Michael P. Kalleres after speaking of his father, who died aboard the USS Stark.

Above: Shanna Lozada places a wreath for the Stark's fallen sailors, including her father.

Stark: Emotions float near surface during memorial service

Continued from B-1

former Navy personnel and around 35 relatives of the sailors who died in the explosion and fires that ensued after the May 17, 1987, attack.

The ceremony included a rifle salute, tolling a bell for the fallen, the playing of taps, a wreath-laying and remarks by family members, survivors and officers who led the naval commands to which the Stark belonged.

On the night it was attacked, the Stark was patrolling the Persian Gulf to guarantee freedom of navigation in the region, said retired Vice Adm. Michael Kalleres, who was commander of the frigate's cruiser and destroyer group at the time.

The ship was struck about 9 p.m. by two Exocet missiles fired by an Iraqi Mirage jet. The attack came during the Iran-Iraq war. Kalleres told the assembly that the Iraqi pilot falsely claimed he thought he had attacked an Iranian ship.

For the next three days, Stark crew members and those from other Navy ships battled raging fires and saved the severely damaged warship.

The attack left 16 widows, including expectant mothers, and 250 grieving family members in addition to the wounded, Kalleres said. "The grief was constant," he said.

That grief was palpable Thursday.

Shanna Lozada wept as she and her brother, Brian Kendall, placed a wreath at the ship's memorial in honor of their father, Steven Kendall, and the others who died in the attack.



Bernard Martin of Waynesboro, Ga., sits near a picture listing the names of his shipmates who died aboard the USS Stark.

Brian Kendall, 22, said he continues to struggle with the death of a father he never knew. "I felt like I needed closure," Kendall said.

Some Stark survivors walked away from the seating area several times during the service. Others said they still aren't over losing their friends.

"It's still so painful — I've got all these bottled up memories," said Bernard Martin, a Stark sailor who said he "still can't talk about that night."

But there were many joyful moments, too.

One came when Martin, 41, spotted former Stark shipmate Chuck Stephenson of Oxford, Ohio. They embraced for several seconds before speaking.

"It's been 20 years, man," said Martin of Waynesboro, Ga.

Stephenson, 46, commented on his friend's long beard. "Man, you've changed."

Martin laughed. "I had just turned 20" at the



Patty Shippee's father, Robert Shippee, was among those who died aboard the Stark.

time of the attack, he said. "I was just a skinny kid back then."

jeff.brumley@jacksonville.com
(904) 359-4310