

Remembering USS Stark



The Naval Station Mayport Color Guard parades the colors.



Allen, Schellhorn and Barbara Kiser, widow of fallen crewmember Stephen Kiser, lay a wreath at the plaque.

Editor's note: The following is a recount of the attack by USS Stark survivor ITC Darryl Allen. Allen read this at the memorial ceremony.

The USS Stark was my first duty station 19 years ago. I was brand new to the Navy, and still carrying the aroma of recruit training center Orlando, Florida. I had no clue of what was in store for me, but after the training I received in boot camp, I was ready to assume the title of "Sailor" in the United States Navy.

Once I checked onboard the ship, for the first couple of months, something strange was happening. Everywhere I

went, I was being referred to as "Boot Camp."

I noticed everyone checking on board that had no shipboard experience gained that label. I was confused. I completed recruit training and did very well, so I did not understand why we were being labeled that way. Looking back, I guess I was a little naive but I did later understand why.

Training commenced right away and it was very intense. Seamanship, Damage Control, Firefighting, and every sailor having a role were driven home without any questions. The missions of keeping world peace along with strength for freedom

were not taken lightly.

May 17, 1987 is still very vivid in my mind. I will never disregard that night, nor do I ever want to. You see that night I saw our heroes in action. I still think of the sacrifices that were made, the split second actions that were taken.

I remember total darkness after the first missile struck the ship. You could not see your hand if you placed it in front of your face but because of the Stark's repetitive training, everything was a reaction.

The realization of what happened did not hit me until I made it to my repair locker and dress out in firefighting gear,



Retired Rear Adm. John Gavan was guest speaker at this year's memorial service. He spoke about the creation of the memorial park in honor of USS Stark.

awaiting instructions. Something told me my role as messenger for repair locker 2 had changed.

Time elapsed and all personnel were not accounted for so we manned up with what we had. Our firefighting started off by cooling off the watertight door before we advanced into the spaces. The boiling hot water splashing off the door made it very hard to maintain the fire hose. Once we were able to enter the space, we heard voices of shipmates in distress.

Not thinking of their own

safety, two members of our fire team charged ahead to pull the injured shipmates to safety. The thought never crossed my mind, it would be the last time I saw them alive. They perished trying to save another shipmate's life.

I learned that night what the definition of a sailor was. I will never let that knowledge

passed on to me be forgotten. That training did not initiate on the Stark. It was passed on from many sailors throughout the navy that came before those who educated me, that knowledge serves as a guideline, but the courage shown that night, could never be taught.

I lost 37 brothers that night but their memories I have kept within me. I will continue to pass on the legacy instilled by those crewmembers. I have often been asked, "Why did you continue your naval service after what happened on the Stark?"

My reply has always been the same. I still have the watch. I am still training my relief. As a survivor, I feel a commitment to stay and share the experience with other shipmates, teaching them the value of knowing their ship and being prepared to DO the job they train for.

The job of a Sailor.