

Memorial ceremony marks 16 years since tragedy

More than 90 families, friends, and Sailors gathered at Naval Station Mayport's Memorial Park to pay their respects to the fallen shipmates of USS Stark (FFG 31), which was attacked by two Iraqi missiles in the Persian Gulf on May 17, 1987.

This year's guest speaker was Capt. Orrin Young, the Commanding Officer of USS Hue City (CG 66) and former Commanding Officer of USS Stark from August 1997 until the ship's decommissioning in

May 1999. Young saw the damage caused by the missiles while on another ship that responded to the attack.

"Our 37 shipmates went into harms way by choice, not by chance but through a sense of obligation," said Young. "They are America's true heroes."

IT1 Darryl Allen, a radioman aboard USS Stark from October 1985 until August 1988, is now stationed on the USS Spruance. Allen tolled the ship's quarter-deck bell as the names of the 37 Sailors who perished in the

attack were read aloud by retired Navy Capt. Peter Wynkoop, Commanding Officer of USS Stark from March 1992 to February 1994. Because of deployments and other commitments, this memorial ceremony was Allen's first real chance to grieve for his fallen shipmates.

"I knew every person aboard the Stark, and they're still inside," he said while patting his chest. "Knowing there's a memorial here, that it's not forgotten, helps a lot."



The children of DS1 Randy Pierce, one of the 37 lost Stark crewmembers, attend the memorial each year. For Logan, right, this is the only memory he has of his father.

-Photo by Martha Rimmer



-Photo by JO2 Melissa Stricklin

Above, Naval Station Mayport Colorguard parades the colors as attendees stand to show their respect. Below, Sailors from the Navy Band Southeast perform during the ceremony.

