

One of the most touching and heartfelt occasions in the history of this city occurred on May 22 at Mayport Naval Station. Although it was tragedy that brought some 1,300 people together inside that helicopter hanger, the memorial service for the victims of the attack on the USS Stark demonstrated the love and compassion one human being can convey to another in sorrow.

President Reagan and first lady Nancy Reagan took the lead in greeting and consoling the wives, children and parents of the 58 men killed or wounded in the Persian Gulf incident. The president and Mrs. Reagan expressed for all of us in Jacksonville and across the nation our deepest sympathy for these grieving Navy families.

I am proud of this community's response of kindness and love to the families of the victims. From schoolchildren to hotel operators this city has opened its heart. But this is symbolic of Jacksonville's long tradition of closeness with the U.S. Navy. We have always accepted Navy families as an integral part of our total community, and we always will. They are the Little League coaches, Girl Scout leaders and service club officers. They support the United Way and the Jacksonville Blood Bank. They volunteer their time and talents to hundreds of different organizations, including government.

I hope we can take the expressions of love for one another that have come out of this tragedy and build an even better relationship. We want every Navy family in the Jacksonville area to realize how much they mean to us.

JAKE M. GODBOLD,
mayor,
Jacksonville

