



Mayport base program remembers 37 who died when USS Stark attacked

FROM STAFF

A remembrance ceremony was held Tuesday at Naval Station Mayport to honor those killed aboard the guided-missile frigate USS Stark nearly thirty years ago.

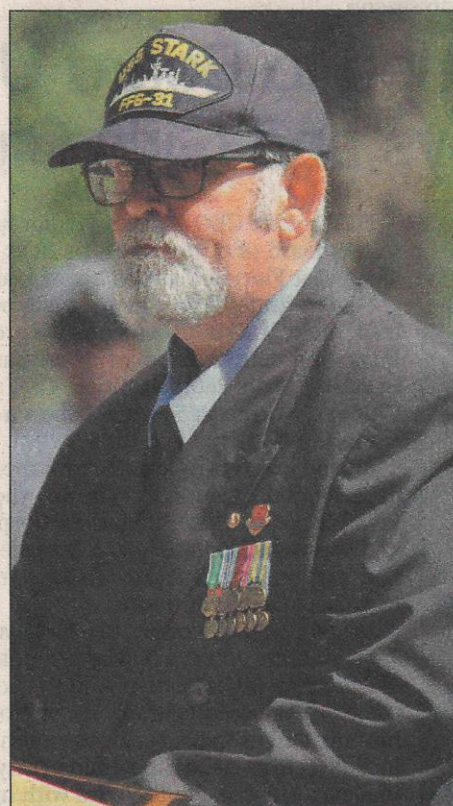
While on patrol in the Arabian Gulf on May 17, 1987, 37 sailors aboard the Stark were killed when two Iraqi missiles struck. Despite the severe damage caused, the heroic efforts of the Stark's crew saved the ship, which was decommissioned in Mayport in 1999.

Tuesday's ceremony was attended by members of the 1987 Stark crew, families of the fallen sailors and others who gathered to honor, remember and hear stories of some of the events that took place following the attack. Bernard Martin, GMM3 USS Stark, 1987, read a scripture to the crowd and Larence Barrow, OSC, USS Stark, 1987, spoke on the importance of the ceremony and remembering those who were lost. Ernestine Foster, widow of QMCS Vernon Foster who was killed in the May 17 attack, talked about her late husband and how his legacy lives on. Martin and Capt. F. David Brangaccio, USNR Retired, LTJG, USS Stark, 1987,

conducted the Tolling the Bell for Tuesday's ceremony and families joined Capt. Robert Whitkop, USN Retired, for a wreath laying. Patriotic music was performed at the ceremony by the Finegan Elementary Children's Chorus.

A visual focal point during Tuesday's ceremony was the displayed stern plate from the Stark that was donated by Janna Ryals, sister of SMSN Earl Ryals, who was one of the 37 lives lost aboard the Stark. Janna purchased the plate in poor condition, had it restored and following Tuesday's ceremony, it will be displayed in Building 1 at Naval Station Mayport. While addressing the crowd, Barrow thanked Janna for donating the stern plate and for sacrificing an item that held much of her brother's memory.

In an effort to preserve the tradition of the annual remembrance ceremony after the ship's 1999 retirement, the Naval Order of the United States, North Florida Commander, assumed sponsorship for the memorial service. The group worked with Naval Station Mayport's Second Class Petty Officer Association to organize this year's event.



Photos by CHELSEA WIGGS

Above, the restored stern plate from the USS Stark is displayed during Tuesday's ceremony. The plate was donated by Janna Ryals, whose brother, SMSN Earl Ryals, lost his life aboard the Stark on May 17, 1987. Below, Bernard Martin, GMM3, USS Stark, 1987, reads a scripture to the crowd.