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USS Stark Memorial Service To Honor Fallen Shipmates

From staff

A ceremony of remembrance will be held at Mayport's Memorial Park on May 17 at 10:30 a.m. to honor the Sailors who were killed aboard the guided-missile frigate USS Stark (FFG 31) 17 years ago. The guest speaker will be retired Capt. William L. Perry.

Chaplain Perry was one of the many people at Mayport who united to support the families and friends who lost loved ones in the attack on Stark. He was the face and voice on radio and television that told the "Families of Stark" story to an attentive, grieving nation. Now retired after a 27-year career, he lives in Alexandria, Va., with his wife.

On May 17, 1987, while on patrol in the Persian Gulf, 37 Sailors died when two Iraqi missiles struck Stark. Despite the severe damage inflicted on the ship, the heroic efforts of Stark's crew saved the ship. Stark was decommissioned here in 1999. In order to preserve the tradition once the ship was retired, the Naval Order of the United States, North Florida Commandery, assumed sponsorship for the memorial service.

Mayport's Memorial Park was established Aug. 1, 1987, with the dedication of the Stark monument. Just a few steps away, the names of 23 USS Saratoga (CV 60) Sailors who gave their lives for their country during the Persian Gulf War are inscribed in a separate memorial.

In case of inclement weather, the service will be held at the Base Chapel.