

Mayport Holds 26th Annual Stark Memorial

From Staff

More than 100 civilians and service members gathered at Naval Station Mayport's Memorial Park Friday for the 26th anniversary of the attack on USS Stark (FFG 31).

On May 17, 1987, 37 Sailors aboard USS Stark were killed after the frigate was struck by two Iraqi missiles while it was deployed on patrol in the Arabian Gulf. Despite the severe damage, the heroic efforts of Stark's crew saved the ship.

Guest speaker, retired Rear Adm. George Huchting talked about the close relationship Sailors develop as they work, eat, and live together on a ship.

"Our lives depend on each other and there is a closeness and a bond that forms and it is unique to being a Sailor and being at sea," he said. "Shipmates -they are faces. They are flesh and blood. They are laughter. They are common experiences. And all of you old Sailors know, they are sea stories."

The service featured accounts of some of the events that occurred during the attack and also



-Photo by Paige Gnann

Former USS Stark crewmembers and survivors of the 1987 attack gather at the Stark Memorial after the ceremony on May 17.

events that followed.

During the somber ceremony, the names of those killed at sea were read aloud by a fellow

shipmate and a bell tolled for each one; 37 strikes of a bell and a 21-gun salute honored the Sailors who lost their lives.

Stark was decommissioned at Mayport 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.