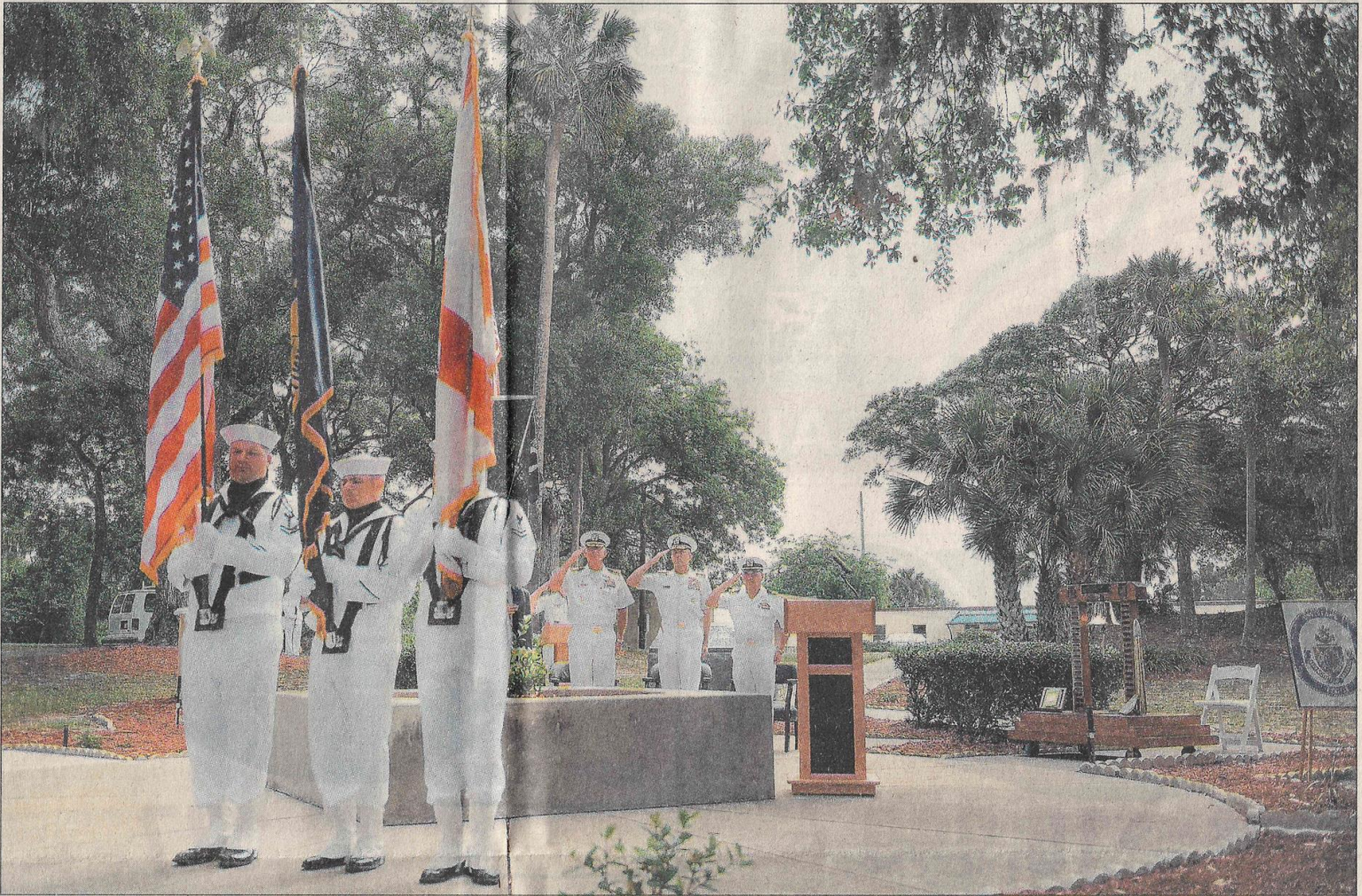




Members of the Naval Station Mayport Color Guard parades the colors during the guided-missile frigate USS Stark (FFG 31) Memorial ceremony.

Photos by MCSA Damian Berg

Mayport honors fallen USS Stark shipmates

By Page Gnann
Mayport Mirror Editor

More than 200 shipmates, friends and families filled the Mayport Memorial Park March 17 to pay their respects to the fallen crew of USS Stark (FFG 31) 25 years after the frigate was struck by an Iraqi missile while deployed in the Arabian Gulf.

In the early morning hours of May 17, 1987, two Iraqi missiles struck the Naval Station Mayport-based frigate.

Despite the severe damage inflicted, the heroic efforts of Stark's crew saved the ship. Thirty-seven Sailors lost their lives during the attack.

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.

Rear Adm. David Thomas Jr., commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic, served as guest speaker for the event.

He was stationed at Mayport aboard

Stark's sister ship, USS Estocin (FFG 15), and talked about the reputation of Stark and its crew in the basin.

"Stark was the ship to beat," he told the crowd.

"Stark was awesome. When we watched her sail off on deployment, [we watched the best of the basin go]. As word came of the sacrifice . . . those tales were told with a sense of pride as we read those words of heroism."

A highlight of the ceremony included the announcement by Florida State Rep. Ronald Renuart that a portion of Main Street on base and Mayport Road to Wonderwood Drive will be renamed USS Stark Memorial Drive.

Following Thomas' remarks, former Stark crew members Tim Martineau read the names of each crew member as the tolling of USS Stark's bell by Peter Weber rang throughout the park followed by the laying of the wreath.

The ceremony ended with a 21-gun salute and "Taps" to honor those who did not come home.



Shannon Lozada places a wreath in honor of her late father Steven Kendall, a USS Stark Sailor, during the 25th annual memorial ceremony for the guided-missile frigate USS Stark (FFG 31) at Naval Station Mayport.