

Lighthouse Flagpole Dedicated in Memorial Day Ceremony

The new flagpole at the Cape St. George Light was formally dedicated to island resident Jimmy Lambert in a Memorial Day Ceremony that attracted more than 200 people to Lighthouse Park on May 26.

After several musical selections by the Franklin County School Band under the direction of Karl Lester, the ceremony opened with a 21-Gun Salute fired from three miniature cannons starting at 12 noon with shots spaced one minute apart. The salute of 21 minute-guns is a military tradition reserved for Memorial Day. After the salute, the United States flag, which had flown at half-staff since 8 a.m., was raised to full-staff by James W. Lambert Sr., U.S.

Navy veteran and father of Jimmy Lambert who passed away in May of 2013. Cannoneers were Dennis Barnell, Fred Stanley, John Ficklen IV, and Joe Garrity.

After a stirring rendition of the National Anthem sung by Josh and Karina Hollingsworth, nephew and niece of Jimmy and Rhonda, Rev. Themo Patriotis of the St. George Island United Methodist Church offered an invocation focusing on the sacrifice of American lives that we commemorate on Memorial Day. "The men and women we honor today have shown great love, not just for friends but for strangers -- for those they never met," Rev. Patriotis said.

Commissioner Pinki Jackel, who represents St. George Island and Eastpoint on the Franklin County Commission, thanked the Lighthouse Association and the Lambert family for contributions to the park which has become the centerpiece of the Island community and spoke of the significance of Memorial Day. "We are reminded as those solemn shots rang out of those we have known and loved, those that we have admired and respected, and those that we will never forget for making the ultimate sacrifice one can make for the preservation of our freedom," Commissioner Jackel said.

Throughout the ceremony, the three flags atop the nautical flagpole fluttered in the welcome breeze, with the American flag on the main pole and the State of Florida flag and the flag of the United States Lighthouse Service on the yardarm. The flagpole was funded by friends and family members of Jimmy Lambert who wanted to see his memory honored on the island that he loved and where he and his family sailed, kayaked, fished, and welcomed friends.



U.S. Marine Corps veteran Joe Garrity fires a cannon in the 21-Gun Salute.

Alex Hinson, a longtime Lambert friend and neighbor on the island, said that when Jimmy and Rhonda arrived at their island home, the first thing Jimmy did was raise the American flag. "He was a patriotic American who loved his country and his flag," Mr. Hinson said, adding that he hoped the lighthouse flags would be "a symbol of hospitality and friendship."



Rhonda Lambert and Jim Kemp.

Rhonda Lambert unveiled the plaque dedicating the flagpole, as SGLA Vice President Jim Kemp read the inscription: "In Memory of James W. Lambert, Jr. Love for God, Country, Family and Friends." The plaque is set in a piece of soapstone left from the construction of the deck on top of the Lighthouse, which in turn is set into a new brick paver pathway that leads to the flagpole.

Retired Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer Mark Vail concluded the spoken part of the ceremony with a reading of World War II veteran Howard Schnauber's moving poem "My Name is Old Glory."

And as it had begun, the program ended with additional selections by the Seahawk Band, as the large crowd dispersed with satisfying memories of a day dedicated to the valiant men and women who gave their lives in defense of our country, as well as to one of our own who lost his own brave fight a year ago.

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