

Clay County Board of County Commissioners Dedicate Neptune Park



Pictured from left to right: Craig Seaton, Broadus Raines; Chairman Mike Cella; Captain Matt Pottenburgh; Karen Kee Pierce; County Manager Howard Wanamaker; Captain Jeff Hill, NAS Jacksonville Base Commander; Commissioner Jim Renninger; Commissioner Kristen Burke; and Michael Milton Trower.

FLEMING ISLAND, Fla – On Thursday, June 17, 2021, the Clay County Board of County Commissioners officially opened and dedicated Neptune Park. This new athletic field and park is located off Thunderbolt Road in Fleming Island, Florida. The park was named in honor of the crew of a Navy P2V2 Neptune aircraft that crashed near that location on June 14, 1951, killing seven of the nine crew members on board. The crew was on a training mission originating from NAS Jacksonville in preparation for the Korean War. After a fire broke out onboard, the crew attempted an emergency landing at the Fleming Island Naval Outlying Field.



Fleming Island Naval Outlying Field in the 1950s

Invited guests included NAS Jacksonville Commanding Officer, Captain Jeff Hill, Captain Matt Pottenburgh, Commander of Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing ELEVEN, and family members of two of the crewmen who died in the crash.

A beautiful Georgia grey granite monument with a bronze plaque engraved with a photo of the Navy P2V2 aircraft was unveiled. Mrs. Karen Kee Pierce, daughter of Lt. Commander Lester C. Kee, and Michael Milton Trower, son of Milton Trower Aviation Mechanic 3rd Class attended the ceremony and shared stories about their fathers.

Both Kee and Trower perished in the crash, along with five other crew members including Lt. Commander L. B Worley, Aviation Mechanic 1st Class Clair Meek Walizer, Aviation Radioman 3rd Class James Alexander Logwood Jr., Aviation Ordnance Airman Turner Eugene Jones, and Airman William Fred Stewart. Lt. Ralph Howell Jones, and Airman Apprentice John Dabbs Barnett survived the crash.



Navy P2V2 Neptune Aircraft

Through a partnership with Clay District Schools, the property was acquired with a long-term lease in 2012, intended to promote the use of school property for community recreational events. Construction of Neptune Park began in February 2019, and was completed in March of 2020, with the lighting installed this past spring.

Park amenities include three ball fields with clay infields, covered dugouts, backstops fences, bleachers, a concession stand, and restrooms.

Chairman Mike Cella told the audience, "When Commissioners can bring recreational improvements to our communities, such as new ball fields and a concession stand, it is a proud moment for us in Clay County. But when we have an opportunity, like we have with Neptune Park, to give something back to the community in the form of a permanent memorial dedicated to our brave heroes who risked everything to protect our country and our freedoms, it is truly a monumental occasion."

NEPTUNE PARK



DEDICATED TO THE US NAVY P2V2 NEPTUNE CREW WHO PERISHED ON JUNE 14, 1951
NEAR THIS SITE WHILE TRYING TO MAKE AN EMERGENCY LANDING AT THE WWII ERA
FLEMING ISLAND OUTLYING FIELD

L.B. WORLEY
LIEUTENANT COMMANDER

LESTER C. KEE
LIEUTENANT COMMANDER

CLAIR MEEK WALIZER
AVIATION MECHANIC 1ST CLASS

MILTON TROWER
AVIATION MECHANIC 3RD CLASS

JAMES A. LOGWOOD JR.
AVIATION RADIOMAN 3RD CLASS

TURNER EUGENE JONES
AVIATION ORDNANCE AIRMAN

WILLIAM FRED STEWART
AIRMAN

SURVIVED CRASH:
RALPH HOWELL JONES
LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE
JOHN DABBS BARNETT
AIRMAN APPRENTICE