



World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veteran George Smith, Chapter 1059 President David Treffinger, and Chapter 1046 President Tony D'Aleo lay the TAPS Monument wreath.

Welcome Home, Vietnam Veterans

DAVID TREFFINGER

“Welcome Home” was the message at the National Vietnam War Veterans Day ceremonies at the TAPS Monument in Green Cove Springs, Florida, on March 27. More than 250 attended the ceremony, which was held in conjunction with VVA Col. William G. Byrns Chapter 1059 and the Clay County Board of Commissioners.

Four of the five Northeast Florida VVA chapters—Clay County Chapter 1059, Duval Chapter 1046, St. Johns Chapter 1084, and Nassau Chapter 1088—were represented at the hour-long ceremony, along with representatives from the Florida State Council.

William G. Byrns, for whom Chapter 1059 is named, was the guest speaker. A former Vietnam War POW, he described how he survived his time at the Hanoi Hilton.

The names of the 22 Clay County servicemembers who died during the Vietnam War were read by County Commissioner J.B. Renninger, a retired Navy Captain, and by Vishi Garig, the county’s archives specialist.

The Chapter 1088 Color Guard presented the colors for the ceremony, which was dedicated in memory of Mason “Ed” Wiggins, who died last summer. A member of Chapter 1059, Wiggins was instrumental in the development of the TAPS Monument, which lists all 66 Clay County servicemembers who have died in America’s wars.

Preceding the ceremony, Florida State Council First Vice President Gary Newman and Tara Green, Clay County Clerk of Court and Comptroller, unveiled a pedestal with the Pledge of Allegiance in braille. ■

FRAN RUCHALSKI, THE FLORIDA TIMES-UNION