

Image not found or type unknown

## Navy Radioman Who Died in Helicopter Crash While Serving Honored During Emotional Memorial Day Ceremony on St. Croix

Family members of Omar A. Duparl joined community and officials at a poignant ceremony to honor his service and sacrifice

Community Center / **Published On May 28, 2024 05:41 AM /**

Tsehai Alfred **May 28, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



Navy radioman Omar A. Duparl's name was memorialized on May 27, 2024 during a Memorial Day ceremony at the Verne I. Richards Veterans Memorial Park in Frederiksted. By. GOV'T HOUSE

When Navy radioman Omar A. Duparl died in 1987 in a helicopter crash over the Persian Gulf, his name became lost amongst the records of the thousands of other Virgin Islanders who have lost their life while serving in the military. On Monday, Duparl's life was remembered and his

name permanently etched into history during the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Verne I. Richards Veterans Memorial Park in Frederiksted.

“Mrs. Duparl, yesterday was the last day your husband's name would not be on at the memorial,” said Patrick D. Farrell, Director of the Virgin Islands Office of Veterans Affairs, addressing Duparl’s widow during his remarks at the Memorial Day event. Around three months ago, one of the late veteran’s family members contacted Farrell, informing him that Duparl’s name was not on any of the memorial statues in Frederiksted which commemorate every Virgin Islander whose life was lost in service. During Monday’s ceremony, a plaque bearing Duparl’s name was duly placed on a statue at Verne I. Richards Veterans Memorial Park.?

Hundreds of other Virgin Island veterans who lost their lives were also recognized at the Memorial Day ceremony, which was attended by government officials including Governor Albert Bryan Jr., Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, and Senate President Novelle E. Francis, as well as families, veterans, and visiting tourists from the cruise ships docked at the Frederiksted Pier. Similar ceremonies took place in St. Thomas and St. John



James Duparl, center, flanked by family members (Credit: Gov't House)

In a tribute to the fallen veterans given by Alvin Milligan, American Legion Post #133 Chaplain, a table with various items symbolized the journey of grief for many of the families in the audience. A red rose signified the blood the veterans may have shed, as well as the families and friends of the missing soldiers who maintain their legacy in memory. Milligan also pointed to a candle resting on the white table cloth as a symbol of hope for the mourning families and friends.

“We got to keep that candle on so that one day those that are our POW, those that are missing in action, will be remembered,” Secundino Roman-Cruz, District Commander 10, said during his remarks.

For Duparl’s son James, his children and family represent the living legacy of his late father. “We learn about his sweet calm disposition every time we see our Grandpa Bunny. We learn about his human light heartedness from my uncles. We were told that my dad attended college in the military and maintained a 4.0 GPA. I see that in my aunts who have graduated top of their class and obtained multiple degrees,” James Duparl said during his remarks.

In addressing Duparl's family and other families in the audience, Governor Bryan highlighted the American identity of Virgin Islanders, and described what it means to be an American. "Truly this is a blessed place to live in, one where you could get on the radio and say whatever you want about the governor, lucky for us. But we love it, it's the freedom that keeps us all awake, keeps us all loving this great country," the governor stated.

Mr. Bryan and the other officials in attendance laid red, white, and blue flower wreaths near the memorial statues, after a roll call of all of the deceased Virgin Island Veterans from May 2023 to May 2024. While Navy RM2 Duparl lost his life decades ago, his remembrance was the highlight of the ceremony. "I believe that my dad would be so proud to know that you all have honored his name by keeping his legacy alive," James Duparl said.

© Viconsortium 2026