

Escambia County Receives U.S.S. Oriskany American Flag for Public Display

The Escambia County Board of County Commissioners was honored to receive an American flag from the U.S.S. Oriskany at the Nov. 2 BCC Meeting, paying tribute those who served on the Oriskany and those who gave their lives while serving and protecting the United States.

The flag will be displayed at the Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building on Palafox Street, providing an opportunity for the public to view the flag and learn more about the U.S.S. Oriskany's history.

"It is an honor to accept this flag on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners and to be able to share a piece of the U.S.S. Oriskany's history with the citizens of Escambia County," District 2 Commissioner Mike Kohler said. "I am very grateful to display this flag, and I hope that it will encourage the public to pause and reflect on the many brave Americans who served on the U.S.S. Oriskany and lost their lives on the ship in service to our country."

The flag was presented to the Board of County Commissioners by Pete Peterson, the Commanding Officer of the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association local chapter 20-3.

The U.S.S. Oriskany – nicknamed the Mighty O – was built shortly after World War II and completed 25 years of service, earning two battle stars for service in the Korean War and five battle stars for service in the Vietnam War.

As a joint effort between U.S. Navy, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Escambia County, the U.S.S. Oriskany was sunk in the Gulf of Mexico on May 17, 2006, off the coast of Pensacola. It is the first naval warship to be intentionally sunk in U.S. coastal waters, and it is the largest artificial reef in the world.

Soon after the ship was reefed in 2006, local dive charter boat captain and former Air Force Pararescue Dave Mucci hung the first American flag underwater on the U.S.S. Oriskany to honor those who served and lost their lives on the ship, later adding a P.O.W. flag to honor and remember prisoners of war.

“It is something special for people who have served in the military, and especially people who have served on the ship, to see the flags flying in their honor,” Capt. Mucci said. “It’s something I hold dear to my heart, and I feel honored to have been a part of it.”

Capt. Mucci took great care to replace the flags as needed over the years, also making sure to follow military protocol to properly retire the flags. He estimates that he replaced the flags at least 2-3 times per year from 2006 until 2014, when he moved away from the Pensacola area to the Florida Keys.

The flags that were retired ended up at a variety of locations, including police departments, government agencies, and with veterans who served on the Oriskany. The flag that was given to Escambia County was on the ship between 2016 and 2017.

Since Capt. Mucci retired from charter diving and left the area, other local divers have stepped forward to maintain the tradition and the flags at the U.S.S. Oriskany dive site, with assistance from the Escambia County Marine Resources Division.

To learn more about the Oriskany Reef and how to access the dive site, visit the [FWC website](#).



An American flag from the U.S.S. Oriskany, which was presented to the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners at the Nov. 2 BCC Meeting.



