

Ceremony

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ment to those who died in the Armed Forces by Martha Vomacka, whose son, Private First Class Robert Stewart was killed in Vietnam. She was assisted by Unit 7 Auxiliary President Maria Lopez and Silvia Hiller, Unit 77 past president.

But it was left to Venables, a 50-year resident of Woodland and U.S. Army veteran, to capture the meaning of the day.

Venables served two years in the Army's Field Artillery and four years in the Army Reserves. He is also a member of Legion Yolo Post 77, but is best known as the owner of the former Woodland Travel, which at one time was one of the largest travel agencies in Northern California.

Venables was introduced by Hunter, who deliberately mispronounced his last name several times as Venables and the audience laughed.

Venables continued the jest by saying he only agreed to speak after negotiating a speakers fee with Legion Member Vince Olvera. "Thanks very much for that introduction," Venables said to Hunter, "even though you screwed it up a little bit."

Then Venables said when he was asked if he would



JIM SMITH — DAILY DEMOCRAT

Members of the Douglass Middle School choir perform the National Anthem during Memorial Day Services at the Woodland Cemetery.

like to be the speaker he noted that "every penny counts" and he negotiated with Olvera for at least 20 minutes before we agreed on a fee of \$50.

"So I sent him a check and here I am," he said.

In a more serious vein, Venables talked about Memorial Day and how the day should be spent honoring those who have lost their lives "defending ours" but that many others take the day off to go shopping or simply rest. He also ex-

plained that a lot of people also confuse Memorial Day with Veterans Day, which is celebrated on Nov. 11 each year to commemorate the end of World War I.

This year, Venables said, the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI will be remembered locally with a parade along Woodland's Main Street to the old Railroad Depot on Lincoln Avenue.

It was from the Railroad Depot that men from Woodland and Yolo County left to serve overseas, some of who

never returned alive.

"Over 900 men boarded trains," he said, "when the entire population of Yolo County was only 14,000 ... It was a huge proportion of Yolo County, and 31 of these men paid the ultimate price."

He also talked about World War II and how Woodlander Hans Christiansen was one of the first to die in the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, by the Japanese. Christiansen was killed while

climbing aboard his aircraft to take on Japanese fighters.

Later, Venables recalled those who died in Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan, including the death of Neil Roberts, a Navy SEAL, who lost his life while defending his comrades during a fire-fight in Afghanistan.

It was only last Thursday, that a now-retired Navy SEAL received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his role in trying to rescue Roberts. A number of SEALs died in that effort.

Many of these people are memorialized with their names carved on black stones at the old Yolo County Courthouse and Venables urged people to pay their respects when possible.

The service also recognized those members of Post 77 who have died over the last year, including Frank L. Bradford, Brady J. Causin, Larry T. Dalton, Walter R. Emmerson, Jr., Aaron Gedatos, Lloyd Gray, Vincent G. Guerrero, Joseph M. Hagerty, James C. Hanson, Fred R. McGrew Jr., Tary A. Michael, Guadalupe J. Montoya, Kenneth E. Nardinelli, James E. Newman, Wally R. Owens, Rudy Rutkauskas, John D. Slaven and Daniel Zayas.

As the names of the deceased were called out, Less Murillo of the American Legion rang a bell and somberly replied "No Answer" to indicate they had passed away.