

# Elks, VFW join in memorial ceremony

By Chris Sykes Staff Writer, Orange Transcript

The members of Elks Lodge 35 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 359 conducted a Memorial Day observance outside their Main Street headquarters on Monday for Americans who gave their lives in defense of the country.

“ We’ve been here since 1889 and the monument out front is dedicated to a World War I chaplain who was killed in 1918,” said Matt Mulligan, the lodge’s secretary.

One of the veterans was Mulligan’s father, Matt Sr., an Air Force veteran of the Korean War and a former Post 359 commander.

“ It’s about honoring people who are out there fighting for all of us and I feel like they’re fighting for me since I’m too old to do it now,” said the senior Mulligan. “ We have a member, Tommy DeAngelis, who is in the Army and just came home but is going back to Afghanistan for the third time soon. We would like to see all our boys and girls over there come home, but I don’t know if I’ll get to see that in my lifetime. But I pray every day that they all come home soon.”

Mulligan Jr. and Lenny Perna, a fifth- year lodge trustee, noted the designation by Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. of the ceremony as the city’s official holiday event.

“ I applaud the Elks and VFW for their long- standing commitment to Orange and our veterans,” said Hawkins. “ It was with great honor that I designated this ceremony the official Memorial Day celebration for the city. I thank our police and fire and community service department and our residents for attending this event.”

Councilwoman Donna K. Williams also attended Monday’s ceremony. Williams said being there reminded her of her service and current obligations to the community and veterans affairs.

“ I served in the Air Force as a secretary during the first Gulf War and Operation Desert Storm,” said Williams. “ I wasn’t out there in the desert on the front lines, but I did help process a lot of the paperwork and help coordinate the logistics that allowed our forces to fight and win. Since I left the service, I haven’t really thought of myself as a veteran. I guess that I am and maybe I do need to get more involved.”

That was very good news to Mulligan Sr., who said veterans groups can use as much “ new blood” as they can get. With servicemen such as himself getting on in age, Mulligan Sr. said the only way for the veterans traditions to continue is for those who served in the Gulf and Iraq and the war in Afghanistan and other conflicts to become involved.

“ They need the support of all the people in this country because they can’t do it on their own,” said Mulligan Sr. “ We can’t shun them the way that was done with the Vietnam War veterans.”