

Living Today



WHITTLING AWAY

Have you renewed your marriage license yet?

The other day I went to sit at the kitchen table for a second cup of coffee and fell off my wallet. I pulled my semi-obese old friend out of my left side rear pocket where it lives, and placed it on the table where I could have a closer look at it.

Realizing that it had been a while since I weeded through it, I pulled all of its contents into the light of day and spread them out on the placemat before me. Unfortunately, it wasn't a larger-than-usual amount of cash that was causing its plumpness; it was my habit of stuffing business cards and phone numbers written on various scraps of paper into it that seemed to be the major problem.

I sorted through the 16 business cards and since I didn't recognize anyone or any place where I could ever remember having been, I placed them in the circular file under the kitchen sink. Same with the scraps of various colored paper with phone numbers on them.

There seemed to be an inordinate number of plastic cards, so I went through them as well. I was able to eliminate my Montgomery Ward and Jamesway credit cards. I also decided that I no longer needed my 1996 AAA membership card or the Kmart cash card I got for my birthday three years ago, since it no longer had any value because I had blown the whole thing on three pairs of nice socks — which I still enjoy almost daily.

Having reduced the pile on the table to what looked to be a manageable amount, I put the remaining important things back into the painfully stretched and saggy-looking chunk of leather. I still had quite a few plastic cards that I considered important, as well as a soccer picture of the Princess when she was nine, and, of course, the licenses. I carry my fishing license and my driving license.

I slid the "light" version of my wallet back into its home pocket and was able to sit down to my delayed cup of coffee with only a slight list to the right. Mission accomplished!

As I sometimes want to do during moments of little physical activity, I took a little time for a ponder. The licenses I had placed back into the wallet came to mind.

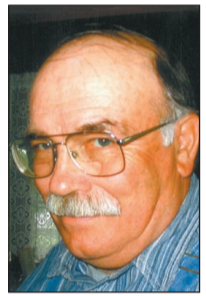
I have other licenses that I don't have to carry with me, the most important of which is my marriage license. I had read the other day that more than half of today's marriages end in divorce. Maybe it's time to rethink the licensing policy for getting married.

My fishing license came with a little pamphlet giving me all the rules and regulations for fishing in our great state. I never got anything like that when I got my marriage license.

In order to get my drivers license I had to take an eye test, a written test and a road test. I have to renew it occasionally or I can't drive. If we made the licensing procedure for getting married more like the process used by the Department of Motor Vehicles, maybe marriages would last longer.

The eye test would be valuable: Do you see the other person for what they really are? A written test might be harder to come up with, but should include questions about patience, pantyhose in the shower, socks on the floor, and who takes out

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Dick Brooks

For the crown, the hunt continues

After 17 years, treasure hunt has yet to reveal its booty

By Colin DeVries
Hudson-Catskill Newspapers

CATSKILL — Eye patches. Peg legs. Planks. The Jolly Roger. Buried treasure.

Those are some of the visuals that come to mind when we think about pirates — the swashbuckling marauders of the high seas.

The realm of pirate fiction paints fantastic tales of adventure, villainy and vast plunders of golden doubloons. Fictional characters from film and novels dominate the popular culture of pirates: Captain Hook from Peter Pan, Long John Silver of Treasure Island, and Captain Jack Sparrow of the Pirates of the Caribbean, to name a few.

It is the dark and notoriously treacherous real world of piracy that makes the idea of taking to the high seas in search of buried treasure lose its luster.

Dangers aside, pirate tales still captivate the adventurous side of us all and create an imaginary world of escapism.

The hunt for treasure, however, is still very much a reality in some corners of modern society. In fact, there is a treasure hunt underway right here in the Catskill region, which has been underway since 1991.

"Captain Kidd and the Missing Crown," a treasure hunt sponsored by TrustCo Bank and the now disbanded Kaaterskill Foundation, has been a challenge for hunters who have come far and wide to claim the prized "missing" crown.

One man, whose search has transcended close to two decades, continues to travel from Norfolk, Va., to search for the treasure.

"Since 1991 I've been up to the Catskills over 37 times," said Stephen Brown, 64, who has

been participating in similar treasure hunting contests since 1963.

To aid him in his quest for the crown is the tale spun by author Jack Hashian, "Captain Kidd and the Missing Crown." Within the text of the story Hashian has embedded clues to a golden doubloon replica, which is two-and-a-half inches in diameter. The story is part of a pam-

phlet available at the Greene County Tourism Visitor Center off of I-87. A hand-drawn map is also included with the story.

Hashian, who passed away in 1999, was believed to also be

known as Trevanian, author of "The Eiger Sanction," "The Main," and 2005's "The Crazy Ladies of Pearl Street." The true identity of Trevanian, however, has never been confirmed — be it Hashian or not.

In the late 1990s, Hashian held a conference at Columbia-Greene Community College to provide treasure hunters with further clues to where the hidden doubloon may lie.

Even with the additional clues, hunters still have been unable to find the doubloon.

Whoever eventually does find the metallic doubloon will be able to relinquish it for the glorious prize — a crown appraised at \$10,600.

The crown is decorated with 18 circular cut diamonds in two square gold plates and 53 colored stones of several varieties, including amethyst, citrine, garnet, blue topaz and synthetic ruby. Each stone is intricately stitched into the gold lamé cloth that makes up the body of the crown, and a heavy gold colored brocade lines the outside edges.

When first appraised, on Sept. 16, 1991, it was valued at \$50,000 by Nerces Jewelers Inc. of New York. An Oct. 16, 1997 appraisal by the A & A Gemological Lab of Albany, however, valued the crown at \$10,600.

Brown, who travels the close to 500 miles to search for the crown, said he believes it is valued at more than \$25,000, and intends to put some of that value toward outstanding debt.

"I've also contemplating giving it to my nephew," he said, adding, "I also considered auctioning it off."

At first, Brown was willing to share the plunder with local resident Arthur Hammel. A contract was even drawn up between them on July 15, 1992, to sell the doubloon and the crown and split the money down the middle. But in 1997, after six years

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Contributed photos

Above is a painting depicting Captain William Kidd on the shore of the Hudson River as some of his treasure is buried. Top right, a replica of one of Kidd's vessels, the Quadah Merchant, is shown. The remains of this vessel are believed to have been discovered just within the last few months in the Caribbean. Right, an artist's rendering of Captain Kidd's vessel anchored north of Catskill point is shown. This might be an accurate depiction if Kidd actually sailed this far up the Hudson. Also pictured above is the famed crown, appraised at \$10,600, which will go to the treasure hunter who finds the hidden doubloon.



UPSTATE TALES

First time's the charm — for once

Wow, was that some crazy weather last weekend? If there is one thing I have learned in my 10 years in Columbia County it is that lightning is much more terrifying than any other weather condition. In fact, before Benjamin Franklin invented the lightning rod, people believed that a house hit by lightning was cursed and it was common practice to let these houses burn to the ground.

One Sunday afternoon during our first summer in the county our house was hit

by lightning. Actually, the theory is that it hit a 100-foot-tall pine tree, split it into two pieces as if it was a toothpick, then jumped to the house and destroyed every electrical appliance that was not on a



Michael Kaufman

surge suppressor.

Fortunately, no one got hurt. Insurance paid for a lot of the damage, but my son Ben, who happened to be on our front porch at the time, did not go outside of the house for two years.

That was our first experience with losing power in the house — but not our last.

One night eight years ago my family arrived at our house to find out that there was no electricity. It was snowing and very cold and it seems that a car hit an electric pole down the street. I

spoke to the workmen and they could not give me a time frame in which it would be fixed, so we decided to make it an adventure with the children.

That lasted about 10 minutes. We found out the toilets didn't work because we have well water and not city water. But we made the best of it and the next morning everything was back to normal.

Also that next morning I called Bob Moore from B & K Electric to discuss installing a backup generator system for the house. About a

week later he had the wiring installed and we purchased a generator. Since then the electricity has never gone out while we were there. We have had blizzards, torrential rain storms, a tornado that ripped the roof off one of the barns, and everything else Mother Nature could throw at us, but we could never time it correctly to be there when there was no electricity.

Bob teased me that it was the best insurance I ever bought. He instructed me to

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Crown

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of searching, the two broke off the contract and Brown was left alone to search for the doubloon.

Now, armed with shovel, map and potential clues, Brown has searched as far north as Coxsackie and as far south as Kingston looking for the doubloon. Along the way he digs with hopes that the doubloon will be revealed.

The true location of the doubloon, while illustrated through prose in the wild tale by Haxian, is known by only two people: Greene County Court Judge George Pulver Jr. and Catskill resident Martin Smith.

When asked if he knows if the coin is still in its hiding spot, Smith replies, "I'm 99.9 percent sure it's still there."

Smith is also the keeper of the prized crown, which was formerly displayed outside the vault of the TrustCo Bank. He also knows that the story is accurate and will lead the hunter to the crown if close attention is paid to its passages' secrets.

"I know exactly how the story was constructed and I don't know of any flaws," he said. "It must be hidden pretty well."

Over the years, Smith has had numerous inquiries from hunters as far as Ohio, Texas and even England. "There was one gentleman who was really on the trail," he said. "I thought for sure he was going to find it."

The hunt for the crown is a sequel to an earlier hunt known as "The Lost Treasure of Rip Van Winkle," which



Capt. William Kidd

CUSTER STATE PARK, S.D.

More than Rushmore: South Dakota road trip

By Alan Scher Zagier
The Associated Press

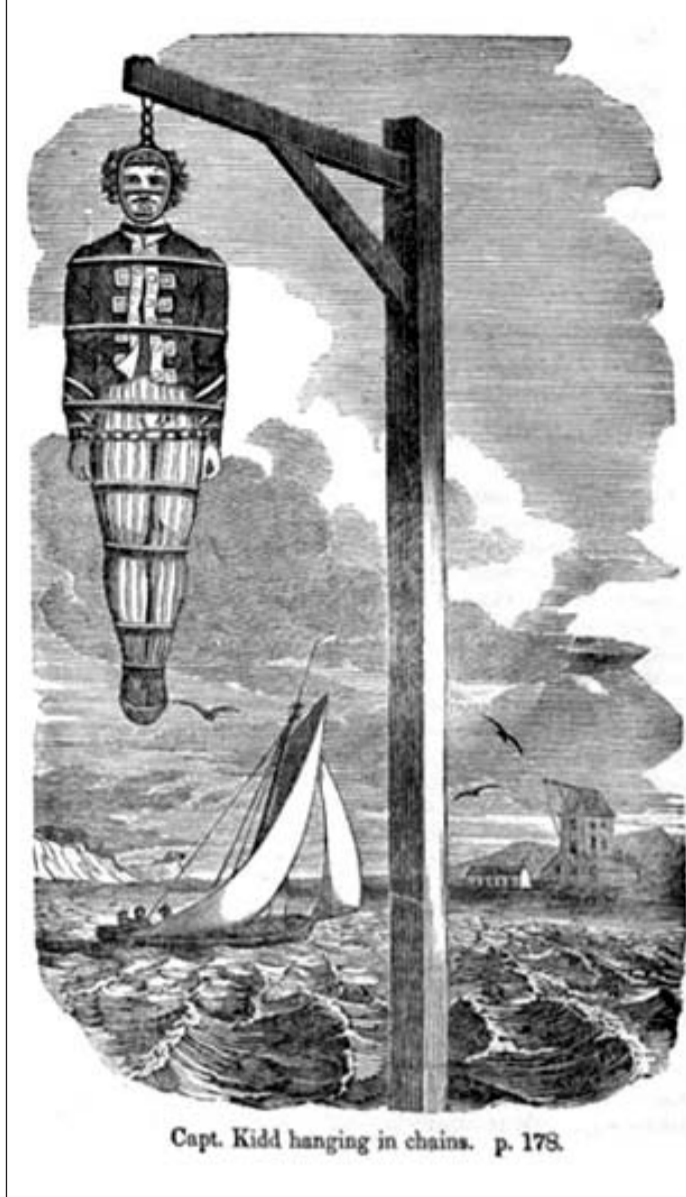
The wild burro wouldn't take no for an answer.

We had already encountered grazing pronghorn antelope, packs of wild turkeys, prairie dogs, and enough bison to render us downright blasé when yet another of the enormous beasts emerged on our four-day trip through the Black Hills of South Dakota.

But the snack-seeking donkeys were a tourist's dream, moseying up to the car window for a bite of carrots, Cheetos or whatever else was handy. The feeding frenzy is common in these parts: Moments later, a particularly assertive burro blocked our path down Wildlife Loop Road until we turned over more foodstuffs.

The early summer vacation was ostensibly a chance to see Mount Rushmore, the civics book staple that a new generation is likely more familiar with from its featured role in "National Treasure: Book of Secrets" (just as an earlier generation saw the monument portrayed in Alfred Hitchcock's "North by Northwest").

Joined by my 12-year-old son and our year-old puppy, we conceived the 900-mile drive from Missouri to South Dakota as a guys-only get-



Capt. Kidd hanging in chains. p. 178.

Photo contributed

Captain Kidd was hanged May 23, 1701 at Execution Dock in London after being tried for piracy and the murder of gunner William Moore. His body was put on display over the Thames River as a warning to others who commit acts of piracy.

took place in 1982. It was concocted by the Kaaterskill Foundation as a mechanism to attract tourism, and featured a bejeweled ninepin that was hidden by the romanticized fictional being created by Washington Irving. Whoever found a stone with the letters "RVW" could claim the ninepin.

Thousands of people flocked to the Greene County region in search of the stone until 1990, when it was finally found and the prized ninepin was claimed. It was found atop the 3,365-foot summit of Evergreen Mountain, within the borders of Lexington.

While the theme of the Captain Kidd hunt is based on watery areas, Brown is certain that it's within the limits of the village of Catskill. He

said he's searched from Catskill Point to the RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary across the Catskill Creek, but still nothing.

The secrets are still embedded with in the tale and have yet to be revealed, and the Greene County Tourism Visitor's Center still carries copies of "Captain Kidd and the Missing Crown," which are available to the public.

It is a mystery waiting for the ambitious treasure hunter and pirate soul in us all to solve.

Though it is debated whether Captain Kidd ever did come this far north on the Hudson River, one thing is for sure: His legend as a reclusive pirate lives in a hidden treasure somewhere in Greene County.

away, a journey to rid our minds of the mutual stress involved in planning Jonah's upcoming bar mitzvah, the Jewish rite of passage.

Meeting the four granite presidents may have been our goal, but we quickly realized that so much more than Rushmore awaited.

The first stop was Badlands National Park, an otherworldly landscape of sweeping buttes, endless canyons and gaping gorges. The park is easily accessible via a 32-mile loop off Interstate 90, less than 100 miles from the heart of the southern Black Hills.

The frontier town of Custer, site of the first gold discovery in the hills and a 20-minute drive from Rushmore, was our home base.

Custer is one of several towns convenient to the national monument, and it scored points for its many restaurants, well-stocked market, convenient access to the 109-mile George Mickelson cycling trail (a converted rail line that cuts a largely flat, north-south path through the mountains) and - unlike some other nearby towns - its noticeable lack of tawdry T-shirt shops.

Thirty miles south of Custer is Hot Springs, a town where a planned housing

development was scrapped 34 years ago after excavators discovered a mammoth burial site.

The prehistoric elephants flocked to the area when its limestone deposits dissolved in water bubbling up from underground springs. Lured by the promise of food and drink, the Ice Age mammoths slid into the water, unable to escape.

The Mammoth Site of Hot Springs, still an active paleontological dig, now hosts scientists and researchers from across the world, not to mention curious tourists. More than 100 tusks from Columbian and woolly mammoths have been found so far.

Just down the road is the Evans Plunge, where a section of the warm water springs that give the town its name were bought almost 120 years ago by entrepreneur Frederick Taft Evans to lure visitors drawn by the water's healing properties.

Brooks

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the garbage.

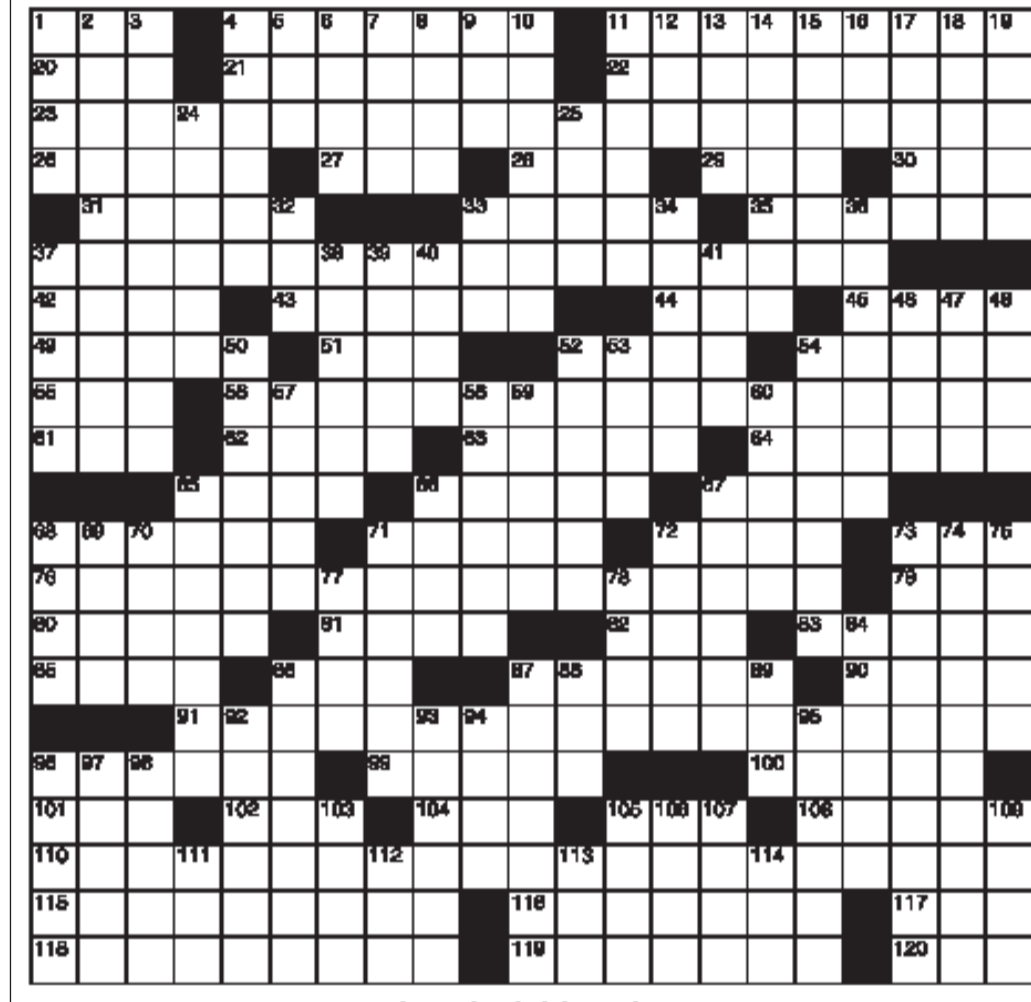
The road test would be easy: Make the couple live in a small apartment or maybe a trailer with four kids under the age of 10 and a puppy for a week. It would also provide a nice break for the real cou-

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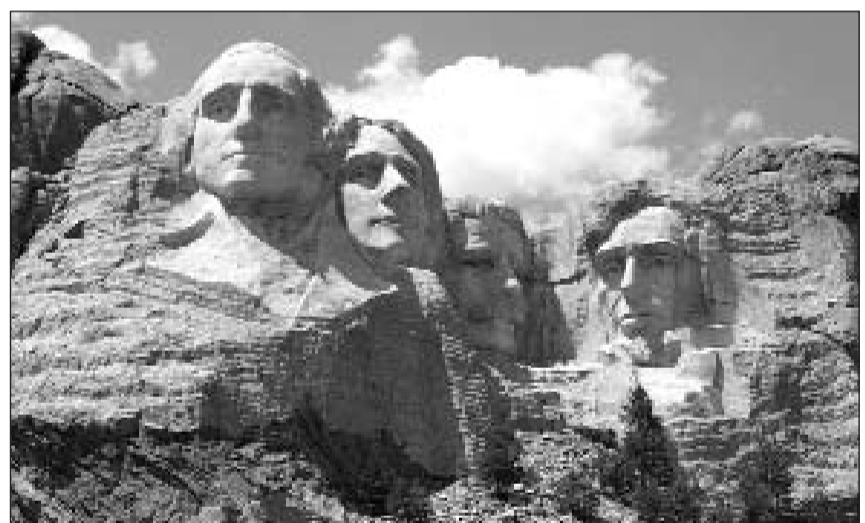
PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo

MESSY BREAKUP

ACROSS: 1 I caught ya! 4 Pathology message 11 Earth orbiter 20 Booked 21 Thinning hair treatment 22 Told 23 Start of a riddle 26 "So long!" 27 Suffix with Stam or Japan 28 About 907 kilograms 29 — Lanka (Indian Ocean nation) 30 Civil War gp. 31 Era 32 Sales pitch 36 Book after Nehemiah 37 Riddle, part 2 42 Fatigued 43 Raddish-brown horse 44 Crook, e.g. 45 Tune in to 48 Egg-making gland 51 Major 20th-cen. conflict 52 Fan sound 54 Pretty girl 55 — room (play piece) 58 Riddle, part 3 61 Towel off 62 Almost an abanmy 63 Birchouse birds 64 Poiked fun at 65 Mice, to cats 66 Roman robes 67 First light 68 AWWFM devices 71 Automaton 72 Foaf's father 73 "CSI" star 74 Riddle, part 4 79 Bit of a bray 80 On — to-know basis 81 Female Idn 82 Snitch (cn) 83 Book part 85 BARE part 86 Hays, and byways 87 Attacked suddenly 90 "Lonely Boy" singer Paul 91 End of the riddle 92 Fake thing in a fireplace 98 Take a surprise shot at 100 Actress Rene 101 "What have we here?!" 102 Bit of body art, in slang 104 With 30-Down, star of old TV's "The Trouble With Father" 105 Zenith 106 Highlands natives 110 Riddle's answer 113 Greatness of admet 118 Spam sender, e.g. 117 Wiggly swimmer 118 Echoed 119 Fish scooper-ups 120 Abbr. on a toothpaste box DOWN: 1 Scio for a dive 2 Gave up control of 3 Against the making of illegal copies 4 Painting on plaster 5 "Alley —" 6 Big meanie 7 Resort near Baria, Fe 8 Bridal shower? 9 Arise article 10 Closest bud 11 Threw rocks at 12 Berk sound 13 Luggage attachments 14 Actor Rupert 15 A bit lardy 16 Enkindled 17 Middle name of Tchaikovsky 18 Nervous 19 — Allan Poe 24 Coolidge's successor 25 "— would seem" 32 There are 165 in a wk. 33 That women 34 Fats 36 Persian Gulf capital (Var.) 37 Gel — in supplees 38 Wrangler 39 See 104-Across 40 Legal order 41 Campus dig 42 Yale team 47 Toward shelter, ad sea 48 Foaf of "Stanford and Son" 50 Two — ("tumble" type) 52 Yule hanging 53 Egg-laying birds 54 Bear and ale makers 57 End of the Raegan cabinet 58 Small-time 59 Rye tongue 60 Early video game system 62 Amount of tobacco 63 Small city 67 Tried to lose weight 68 Some TVs and VCRs 69 Top-rated 70 Fight in a western 71 Shakes awake 72 Disreputable 73 Oolong, e.g. 74 Provided funds for 75 Brown beads 77 Early word for a baby 78 H.S. math 84 Volkswagen model 86 Rowing race 87 Supposed 88 Maturate 89 Uln article 92 "You ain't seen — yet!" 93 Occurred as a result 94 Small grapes 95 Glucose and fructose 96 Be very successful 97 HE — run (be very successful) 98 Postage 103 High-strung 105 Web 106 Valhalla VIP 107 Gomer on a sitcom 108 Emmy-winning Ward 111 Day — colors 112 B-F link 113 Bust buddy 114 Put money (cn)



#1,371 Average time of solvers: 92 minutes.



Dirk Lammers/AP file In this July 18, 2006 file photo, Mount Rushmore National Memorial is shown near Keystone, S.D.

A handful of spas remain nearby, but the Evans Plunge is now a water park with an indoor and outdoor swimming pool, slides, rope swings, floating (plastic) alligators and more. There's an observation deck for parents who don't want to swim, as well as a hot tub and health club for adults.

the Pine Ridge reservation.

Much of that history is on display at the Crazy Horse Memorial, a massive mountain carving and 60-year work in progress that once complete — if ever — will dwarf Mount Rushmore, which inspired its creation.

Tales

Continued from page C1

keep the generator battery on a charger and start it periodically to make sure there were no problems. I followed his directions.

Last weekend my hopes and dreams were finally realized. We were having a nice afternoon when a thunderstorm rolled in. Lightning must have hit an electric pole because our house went dark. It was time to go into action.

I got out a flashlight, went to the basement, unrolled the power cord which had not been touched in eight years,

and brought it outside. I then got the generator, started it up, took the house off line, plugged in the cord, switched the house to generator power, and voila — the lights went on.

I was a little surprised, but you could have knocked my wife over with a feather. Invariably nothing I have installed works the first time. There is a learning curve to any piece of equipment, and it usually takes a few tries before I get it to work correctly. But this time I just did

so bad for most folks — my parents are about to celebrate their 70th anniversary. It brings to mind the old Beatles song "All you need is love."

Thought for the week: A man may be a fool and not know it, but not if he is mar-

ried. (H.L. Mencken)

Until next week, may you and yours be happy and well.

Dick Brooks can be reached at whitlingaway@yahoo.com.

It was a perfect day.

Read more of Michael Kaufman's columns at www.upstatedownstate.com.

