

**Letters**

**From page 3**  
 ing Katrina. FEMA and the Corp see structural projects as failing catastrophically and, as a result, causing unprecedented levels of damage. Second, everyone with whom I spoke talked about the millions of dollars and decades of effort needed to simply obtain permitting for a dam. Right or wrong, most public officials I spoke with at the local, state and federal level were not encouraging about the prospects for a dam.

As a result of Ms Thompson's letter, I decided to do my own, "back of the envelope" calculation to "site" a retention

dam. Thanks to Dale Webb, I learned the water flow during the flood. Using Google Earth I found one or two areas up Rock Creek from Vernonia where a potential reservoir could reach 1,000 feet in width (more or less) and maybe a couple miles in length. Guessing at an average depth, I calculated a total volume and then estimated the fill rate to be only 1.6 hours. Even if that estimate is off by a factor of 10, the reservoir would seem inadequate to me.

Of course, I am not an engineer. But that fact actually proves my point. Very few of us

are. We have very competent federal staffers (I have met them) who are engineers and whose job it is to do these kinds of calculations and steer public investment. I, for one, think we should trust them, at least in this case.

I appreciate Ms. Thompson's concern about the loss of tax base. I began talking to the Council about that in December of 2007. Through grants from the state and FEMA, we have delivered more than \$24 million to help businesses, citizens and the schools recover, so far. This is not counting FEMA payouts to victims or flood insur-

ance proceeds. All of this investment has a positive impact on values and the real estate market in Vernonia. It is hard to see that right now, with the national real estate collapse in the background. But, this substantial investment has helped and will help more in the future.

Many flooded families have been adamant about remaining in their homes, despite their dangerous location. FEMA and the state have helped us pass though funds to lift these homes. Other, have made the sounder choice (from my perspective) to leave the flood plain using the generous buy-

outs afforded by state and federal programs. Hopefully, many of these families will relocate within Vernonia.

It is a misunderstanding to assume that these purchased homes would remain occupied and paying taxes. These properties were substantially damaged, that is, more than 50% of their value was spent repairing them. As such, the city must force these owners to lift their homes or tear them down within four years. If the city does not, the whole community could lose access to flood insurance. Since flood insurance is re-

**Please see page 22**

**Just for Fun**

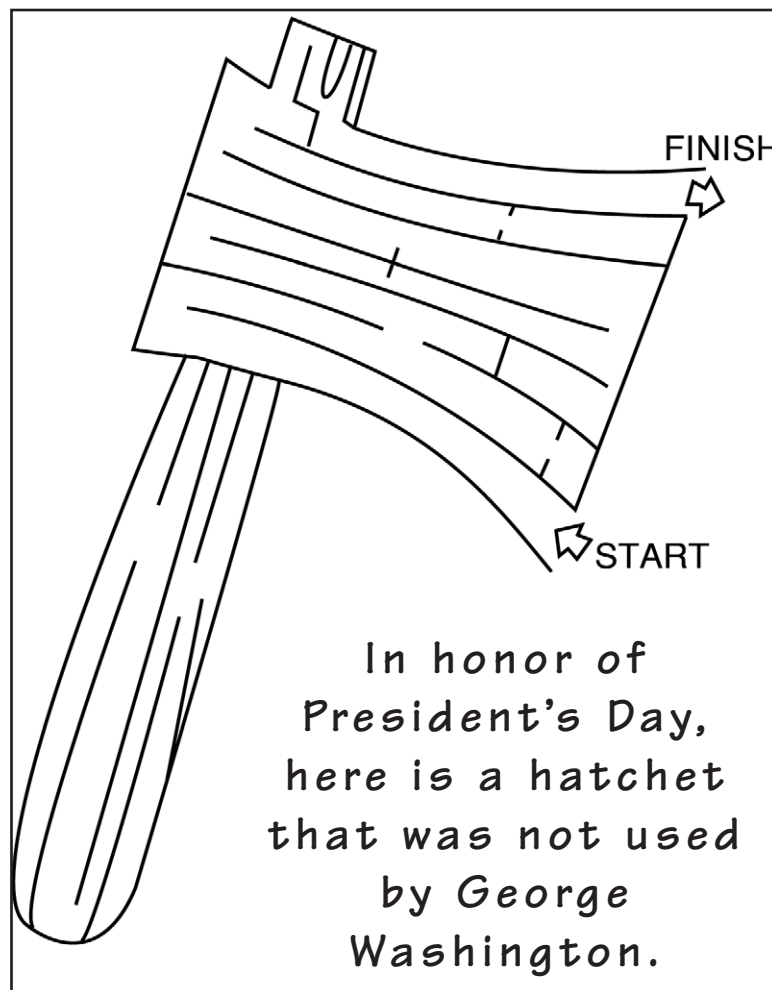
Casey and Kyle by Will Robertson



Solve this Sudoku

	7					4		
			6		9	8		
2			4	5				
		5			1			3
	3		5		8		1	
8			7			5		
				6	4			2
		4	3		7			
		1						6

Answer to February 3  
 Sudoku is on page 23



In honor of  
 President's Day,  
 here is a hatchet  
 that was not used  
 by George  
 Washington.

He that  
 loves read-  
 ing, has  
 everything  
 within his  
 reach. He  
 has but to  
 desire, and  
 he may pos-  
 sess himself  
 of every  
 species of  
 wisdom to  
 judge and  
 power to  
 perform.

**WILLIAM  
 GODWIN**  
 English writer  
 (1756-1836)