

Home Country

To whom it may concern...

March 12, 2010

U.S. Census Bureau
Capture Center
Phoenix, AZ

Dear Census Bureau:

You can't imagine my thrill as I drove up to the gate yesterday at my cabin in the middle of nowhere and found that you'd left me a census form to fill out for the place, addressed to S. Navajo Loop, Belen, NM.

This was accurate, by the way, since my little cabin (designated "red cabin" on the envelope) is the only one on S. Navajo Loop. Your designation of red cabin is only half correct, though, because the other half of the cabin is painted yellow. And when I get more yellow paint, I'll finish the job. The cabin is called "The Birdhouse," as Bird is the nickname of my buddy who gave me the cabin. This doesn't mean that very many birds live there, however. In fact, the only resident birds I can think of nest under the house and hatch some babies every summer. I don't expect them back from winter quarters for maybe another month though. They are brown and nondescript and could probably be classified as dickie birds. They are only seasonal residents.

As for permanent residents, there is one very long-legged jackrabbit who is usually seen in the yard when I drive up, but runs off when I let the dogs out of the truck. I have no idea whether or not he got married and had pups recently. He doesn't stick around long enough to ask.

Now for serious permanent residents, I'd have to include the prairie dogs. My acre and a half has three permanent prairie dog towns. Not too big ... more like prairie dog villages. As for race ... well, they're a sort of nice New Mexico tan, and for religion, I'd have to say vegetarian, as they worship my baby trees and hope I continue to plant more.

There used to be frequent visits of diamond-back rattlesnakes, whose existence was terminated by me as quickly as possible. That is why God made shovels. However, last summer I spent all season without seeing a single one. This is thanks to one of my dogs, a Treeing Walker coonhound named Rocky. On Rocky's frequent visits to The Birdhouse, he has taken on the task of making certain every



rock, every fence post, every bush and every prairie dog hole gets at least a squirt and a half of his attention.

The large water dish on the cabin's porch is so Rocky can reload when necessary. Rattlesnakes being what they are, they don't care for the smell of ammonia, so they have steered clear of the place quite nicely.

But of course there is never a clean victory in anything good because this also means the snakes steer clear of the prairie dog villages, so Mr. and Mrs. P. Dog are multiplying and replenishing the place at an astounding rate. This is

fine for the population of prairie dogs, but plays hob with the population of Slim's baby trees.

As for human residents, there are none. If there were, it would be me. I am 67, Protestant, Anglo, occupation newspaper columnist, don't make enough money, dislocated my shoulder this fall while goose hunting, and must wear corrective lenses. But while The Birdhouse (whose official address is actually 6 Gobernador Street) is a hideout for an aging writer and cowboy who sneaks off as often as possible from the burdens of electricity and running water, I'm not

really a resident. I live in Albuquerque with my lovely wife, Catherine, and we're looking forward to filling out one of your forms when we get one here at the house. We have a mailbox.

I noticed on the envelope you left for me it says "Your Response is Required by Law." Hey, I'm a law-abiding guy who loves his country. If you should have any more questions about the population down at The Birdhouse, you have only to leave me another note by the barbed-wire fence. And thank you, by the way, because in the eight years I've owned the place, this census form was the first mail



Slim Randles

I've ever received there.

Belen, NM 87002
The Half-Red Cabin

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Jose, Stephanie, Noah & Jacquin count here ... You do too!

If you reside in Vermillion on April 1, 2010 you count here!
The information the census collects helps to determine how more than \$400 billion dollars of federal funding is spent on infrastructure and services each year. The census is quick, easy and safe! Do your part and return your census form!

IT'S IN OUR HANDS 2010 Census