

# 'I can't prove I was born, but you can't deny I'm here' W.R.

Was your birth registered? Unless you have documentation you'll get nowhere protesting as Will Rogers once did: "I can't prove I was born, but you can't deny I'm here."

A total of 320,899 persons in the United States who found themselves in that predicament in 1974 turned to the U.S. Bureau of the Census for help. (The Bureau is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce's Social and Economic Statistics Administration.)

More than two-thirds of the

applicants receiving help from the Census Bureau lived in 11 southern states: Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, Virginia, Arkansas, Florida, and Texas.

Persons unable to obtain a birth certificate may have been born before 1920, before birth registration became mandatory in every state. Or their birth record may have been accidentally destroyed by flood or fire, or simply never recorded.

Or they may have been unable

to obtain a delayed birth certificate because they couldn't lay their hands on acceptable evidence of their birth such as a baptismal certificate, a family Bible in which their birth was chronicled, or an affidavit from the attending doctor or midwife.

Every ten years in years ending in zero, as you know, the Bureau of the Census takes a population census, gathering facts about every human being in the country.

Realizing how valuable this information might be to anybody

called upon to prove his existence, the Bureau wisely established its Personal Census Service Branch, more commonly known as the Age Search Branch, which will send anyone who applies for it a transcript of his own census record from the census year that will best serve his needs. For example, a man born in 1905 who wants certification of his age would probably be sent a copy of his census record from the decennial census of 1910.

The record would not contain his birth date, but it would show him as having been five years old in 1910, which is just as good. He can then present this record as supporting evidence when applying to the State in which he was born for a delayed birth certificate.

Or he can use it in lieu of a birth certificate. Census records are now accepted as a substitute by all Federal and State agencies and by virtually all of private industry.

Since 1920, when the Age Search Branch was established, nearly 10 million persons have taken advantage of this unique service. Currently, approximately 350,000 requests are received annually, a total that comes to about 1,300 daily.

People write in for documentary evidence of age for reasons of employment, retirement, driver's license, insurance, military service, income tax, marriage, voter registration, welfare benefits, even Little League baseball — anything that requires evidence of age.

The Social Securities Administration and the Railroad Retirement Board Agency both place great reliance on census records, and they assist many persons each year in obtaining acceptable evidence of age through census records.

Census records can also give evidence of citizenship for passport purposes, of occupation (for example black lung benefits for coal miners), and of

relationship for estates or inheritances, insurance, DAR membership, family records, and other genealogical purposes.

All information in census records is confidential by law. The Bureau of Census and every one of its employees is prohibited by Federal law from disclosing records except to the person himself, or for a proper purpose, to a legal representative.

Information about a minor child may be obtained upon written request of either parent.

For records pertaining to a deceased person, the applications may be signed by a blood relative in the immediate family, the surviving spouse, a beneficiary, or the administrator or executor of the estate and in all cases, a death certificate must be furnished.

A fee of \$7.50 is charged for a search of two censuses and a transcript of the information found. Additional copies of the transcript cost \$1.00 each.

Service generally requires two to four weeks. A fee is charged because the Age Search Branch is fully self-supporting. It does not receive any tax monies.

Persons needing proof of age for Social Security purposes should apply to their local Social Security office. Others should write to the Personal Census Services Branch, Bureau of the Census, Pittsburg, Kansas 66762, for an application form.