



Opinions

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Sanpete Messenger

A5

My Prerogative

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Managing Editor



*Since it makes cents, mailing census form makes sense
(and other reasons to mail it in by Friday's deadline)*

I have an admission of civic irresponsibility to make: I didn't want anything to do with filling out the 2010 U.S. Census when the form first arrived in my mailbox.

I remembered the thing in 2000. I remember seeing the form, looking at all the questions and saying to myself, "I only have one life to live, and I'm not going to spend half of it filling out this darn form."

That, and I remembered the political wrangling regarding something about statistical analysis versus actual headcount, blah, blah, blah ...

So I wasn't thrilled when the thing arrived on schedule, lo, these 10 years later.

I called Mike Mower, Gov. Herbert's advisor and state planning director, to see if there was any reason I should mail in the census form, and I was surprised to find out that the census was one area where the Great State of Utah was still cooperating with the federal government.

Like any good patriot, I protested. The mail-in form, I noticed, was return-postage paid. As a citizen who values where my tax dollars go if and when I pay them, I asked if it wouldn't be cheaper if I spared the government the postage.

"It saves taxpayers quite a bit of money if people just go ahead and mail it on their own," he said.

Really?

I checked it out. He was right. For

every household that does not send in the mail-in form, the government has to send around door-to-door salesmen at a cost of about \$13 a door.

At that rate, and with only 53 percent of Sanpete County's households returning the mail-in form at the time of this writing (according to the Census Bureau's website and interactive return-rate map, www.2010.census.gov/2010census/take10map), Sanpete residents are needlessly costing the government and its taxpayers nearly \$50,000. Sure, it's a tiny amount in relation to the federal government's total budget, but it's sort of significant for comparatively tiny Sanpete.

Utah's return rate statewide is 68 percent. The national rate is 66 percent. At the time I spoke with Mower, Sanpete's rate was a measly 41 percent.

Okay, score one for fiscal responsibility.

But what about Big Brother, I asked: Wasn't the census really just a big pair of binoculars set upon his already too-big, too-prying eyes ("the better to see you with, my dear, muah ha ha ha ha")?

"There are those who don't want the government knowing what they're doing," he admitted. "But what we stress is that, by law, the Commerce Department [under whose purview the census falls] can't share census information with any other governmental entity."

And, he said, the census was constitutional. "This is something that

the Founding Fathers established in 1790. It's in the original Constitution."

Again I checked it out. Again he was right. The decennial census was established in the original U.S. Constitution, not the Bill of Rights (those first 10 constitutional amendments insisted upon by those silly, 18th-century bleeding-heart liberals) or in any amendment added thereafter.

Score another point for the Founding Fathers.

"But the census is a pain in the—," I said (in those very words, if I remember correctly).

"This year, the census is much less intrusive than it has been in the past. The questions are much more narrow, and there are fewer of them than they have had in past Censuses," he countered.

"Don't you mean, 'narrower,'" I asked, "and is it 'censuses' or 'censes?'"

He didn't care and told me to edit my article and not our interview.

His point was, simply, "The census just wants to know how many people live in the United States." Okay, another point for user-friendliness.

But why?

"How we determine how many representatives Utah will have in Congress is through the census," he said. Utah's been trying to wheel and deal for a fourth representative for a couple years now. It could happen automatically with new census numbers on our side.

And the census affects state politics too, Mower said, particularly as it influences how state legislative

districts are drawn. Accurate population counting assists (theoretically) in adequate representation. "Those in rural Utah in particular need to make sure they are counted. Sanpete could be doing a little better."

I took umbrage at that until Mower continued: "As someone whose ancestors were recorded in Sanpete County in the 1870 census, I want to make sure that Sanpete is well counted." I told him I bet he said that to all the counties but gave him a point for flattery anyway.

"Oh yeah? Where's *your* census form," he asked.

I told him it was stuck with a magnet to my refrigerator.

"And that's why Sanpete's at 41 percent," he said.

Touché.

But speaking of family history, Mower said that's another reason to get the census form mailed in.

"It's a great tool in historical and

family history research," he said.

Ah, I saw. An appeal to the devotion to religious principles held by the bulk of Utah's population.

He assured me he was being very careful to do exactly not that.

Okay, score one point for history, but minus one for getting so close to not separating church and state.

I didn't really tally the final score, but I knew all the points were his, leaving me to say this: Sanpete, you have until this Friday to mail in your census form. Take your pick of reasons: fiscal, constitutional, political, historical or religious. Or even athletic—in the words of Nike, "Do it."

Oh, and, by the way, Mr. Mower, I mailed mine this morning.



Another Look

By Sean Hales,
Former Associate Editor
of the Sanpete Messenger



Editor's note: Several years ago, Messenger Sports Editor Sean Hales wrote a column that, in essence, was a tribute to Wilbur Braithwaite. In light of Braithwaite's passing this week, we felt it appropriate to re-run the column as it first appeared on Dec. 8, 2004:

coach vs. Coach

Sometimes being a journalist is hard.

I'm not talking about uncovering scandal at the highest levels of government or the stress of meeting deadlines. What I'm speaking of is much more mundane—like the proper capitalization.

For example: is it Coach, or coach?

According to the Associated Press Stylebook, the bible of journalistic writing rules, coach is "lower case in all uses, as a job description, not a formal title." It then directs you to the main section, where there is page upon page of minutiae regarding the

proper capitalization of titles.

Okay, it isn't page upon page, but there is a lot to read if you want to understand whether or not to capitalize "chief monkey trainer" (you shouldn't, by the way) or "associate pooper-scooper" (that one's lowercase too).

But back to coaches. The issue arose as I was writing a recent article on Wilbur Braithwaite's induction into the Utah Tennis Hall of Fame.

The problem was mostly mine because of the legend that surrounds Wilbur Braithwaite. I couldn't force myself to lowercase the "coach" preceding "Braithwaite." It didn't

seem to jive very well with people's respect and love when they speak of the man.

I thought I had found a loophole to enable me to capitalize "coach" when I found this: "Capitalize formal titles ... a formal title ... is one that denotes a scope of authority, professional activity or academic accomplishment."

Certainly, as I remember back to the first time I met Wilbur when I was very young, "scope of authority" describes it pretty well. Of course, it could have been that I was (and still am) scared of his safari hat.

But it's more than that too. So I looked to the dictionary. "Coach—A person who trains an athlete or team of athletes. ... To give instruction or advice in the capacity of a coach."

What of all Wilbur's instruction and advice to players or students outside the classroom or off the courts? Certainly, his willingness to listen and offer his time and wisdom is as much a part of who he is as his athletic prowess.

For some, coaching is what they do. It is a job description.

For Wilbur, it's *who he is*.

Whether it is instructing for

proper form on a serve, helping a player through private struggles or offering career advice to former students, coaching permeates every facet of Wilbur's life.

I'll admit I don't know Wilbur that well. He never instructed me in the finer points of the overhand serve or how to rush the net. I never took a math class from him.

But I know how people speak of him. And I know what he has given to our communities. And I know that when I have had occasion to be around him, I have had the feeling that I was in the presence not of greatness—Wilbur is too humble for that—but of a man with great integrity, sportsmanship, dedication and humility.

Wilbur never coached. He is a coach in everything he does, through and through.

Anyway, I eventually found my answer as to whether or not to capitalize coach. The AP Stylebook says to capitalize titles of nobility. And at least as far as Wilbur Braithwaite is concerned, "coach" has certainly become a noble title.

So this one's for you, Coach Braithwaite.

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