

This week's subject probably holds the Idaho championship for the longest stop-over on record.

He and Mrs. Mayes thought they were on their way to California when they stopped in Meridian in 1930. That was 27 years ago-and Bill is still here. The "trip to California" had started from Arkansas-Bill's home state. He was born in the little town of Goshen, Arkansas, July 10, 1895. His father, Samuel J. Mayes, was a farmer in the community.

Bill was one of eight children, with four sisters-Effie, Ida, Lizzie and Liza: and three brothers-Ward, Tom and Johnny. Meridian is now the home address for three others of Bill's family. Two of his brothers, Ward and John, live here; as does his sister, Effie, now Mrs. Ed Keller. Another brother and sister, Tom and Lizzie (Mrs. Goodman), now live in Bakersfield, California. Ida (Mrs. Monroe Keller) lives in Modesto, California.

Bill attended grade school in Goshen and at nearby Springdale. He also graduated from high school in the latter town-but that was only the start of his studies. He went on to the teachers' college at Conway, Arkansas; then to another teachers' college at Silom Springs - and topped it off by completing a course at a business college back in Springdale. Part of his school record indicates that Bill was already warming up for his later career as an insurance man. While at the teachers' college in Springdale, he was not only key man on the school's winning debate team-he also went on to win the state championship as the best individual debater in Arkansas.

Fortified with his studies at the three colleges, Bill began his work of passing on at least part of that knowledge to Arkansas students. He was a regular old-professor -age 17 years- when he took on his first teacher's post at Hickory Flat, Arkansas. Bill was not only the teacher at Hickory Flat-he was the entire faculty for all eight grades. It was a responsible position, teaching all subjects to 38 kids, so Bill rated the regular going salary of a full-time teacher. \$40.00 a month. But \$40.00 went a lot farther then, so Bill not only stayed at the Hickory Flat school for two years, he went from there to Cane Hill, Arkansas, where he taught for three years; and then to Wyman, Arkansas, where he was the teaching staff for another four years.

About that time, United States decided to join in the job of putting Kaiser Wilhelm in his place, and Bill entered the army. Following his training, he was assigned to the permanent training cadre of Company A, Battalion B, at Camp Pike, Arkansas-one of a group of 21 whose job was to train infantry recruits for action overseas. Bill's service included the winter of 1917-18, when the flu epidemic was almost as deadly an enemy as the German army. Many of the recruits died at Camp Pike that winter, but Bill and the rest of the toughened cadre group escaped the flu. When Bill was discharged in 1918, he made his first visit to Meridian - to visit Mr. and Mrs. Ed Keller, who were living here then. The Kellers had moved here from Arkansas before World War I, because of a long drought that had stricken their home state.

On that first visit here, Bill worked for C. C. Todd, as manager of the Todd general store at Melba. He stayed only eight months that first time. Maybe it was homesickness that called him back to Arkansas-or maybe it was the memory of a girl

he'd known almost all his life. She was Ethel Packer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Marian Packer, of Cane Hill, Arkansas. But there was a change in her name soon after Bill got back to Arkansas. The wedding was at Fayetteville. The newlyweds went to Sonora, Arkansas, as a man-and-wife faculty for the grade school there. Mrs. Mayes taught the first three grades, while Bill was senior professor, having the five upper grades.

Three years later Mrs. Mayes retired from teaching. They were spending the summer at Springdale, when their son, W. Dean Mayes, was born June 7, 1921. (Dean is now another part of the Meridian branch of the Mayes' family. He married Dorthea Doss July 15, 1943, and now Bill has two grandchildren - Linda 10, and Dean Jr., Dean is a member of the Meridian city council, and is a full partner with his father in the Mayes & Mayes insurance agency here.)

After Dean arrived back there in 1921, the family moved to Summers, Arkansas, where Bill was principal of the high school for three years. From there he went into the banking business - as assistant cashier of the First National Bank at Lincoln, Arkansas.

From counting money, Bill changed to counting noses-taking the position of district supervisor at Fayetteville for the 1930 United States census. When he closed the Fayetteville office in July, 1930, Mr. and Mrs. Mayes and the nine-year old Dean started on the trip which was supposed to wind up in California. That was the start of Bill's record-breaking stop-over. He came through Meridian, to visit members of his family already living here, and that was that as far as California was concerned.

One of Bill's first jobs here was counting noses as he had done in Arkansas. He remembers that Meridian fell just one short of having 1,500 population for the 1930 census-the final figure coming up as 1, 499. For the next several years, Bill worked clerking stock sales in the area-covering Ada and Canyon counties, and almost every other cattle-raising area of Idaho. For five years, he acted as manager of the Meridian Sales Yard operated by Harry Bryce-on the site of what is now Keller's Market. (SE corner of Pine & E Second.)

He began to edge into the insurance field about 1946 - and did well enough to open the Meridian office, in partnership with Emory Lane. Mr. Lane passed away two and a half years later, and Bill bought the other half of the business from his partner's widow. Dean, who had graduated from the University of Idaho and later had worked at the Moscow school, joined his father as a full partner in the Meridian office.

During his years here, Bill has been one of the most active American Legion members. He had originally joined the Legion when it was first formed, and was a charter member of the Lincoln, Arkansas, post. He rose through the various offices of the Lincoln post, and was a commander there for a term. In Meridian's Legion post, Bill has held every one of the offices-including that of commander for 1933-34. Currently, he is serving as the local Legion's adjutant and service office. As a Legionnaire, he was also selected for a national honor-being named to the National Rehabilitation committee in 1951-52.

There was the familiar twinkle in Bill's eyes as he recalled that "stop-over" in Meridian 27 years ago. "You know," he said, "I'm beginning to like the place. I might even decide to stay."

His family, his fellow Legionnaires, and the countless friends he has made throughout the area, hope that Bill does just that.