

Probably Swede's friends will look at the above name, check it with the picture, and say, "Well the editor goofed again." For once, we didn't – it's Swede, all right. When Swede told us his middle name, we said, "Named after the Wizard of Oz, no doubt." "You think you're kidding," Swede said, "but that's exactly what happened. One of my grandmothers talked my folks into it."

To further confuse you, "Swede" isn't Swedish at all. As he explains it, "Back in the days when I had hair, I was a real tow-head. Somebody started calling me 'Swede,' and the nickname's stuck ever since."

Elden is strictly an Idaho product – born in Blackfoot August 25, 1911. His dad, Henry R. Boice, worked for the Utah-Idaho Sugar Co. and the family also had a farm about two miles out of town. (The folks still live there, but the senior Mr. Boice is now retired.) Swede has one brother – Wesley, who lives in Portland, Oregon. Wesley is a maintenance engineer for Dairy Gold; and has one son, Hugh.

When it came to school, Swede believed in patronizing home industry, completing grade school, high school and college right in Pocatello. When we asked him about sports activities at high school, Swede said, "Wesley and I did a lot of running and pitching – running right home after school and pitching in on all the farm chores."

But there was time for one sport, in which Swede was later to be a star. Their dad gave the boys two pairs of boxing gloves, but laid down a strict rule: "You're not to get these gloves out when anyone else is here – just use them yourselves." The boys agreed, and kept their word. In fact, they didn't even tell anyone about the gloves. As the years went by it got to be quite a mystery with the other Blackfoot kids – "How come Wes and Elden are so good with their dukes? Must be natural born boxers." As it turned out, that description really fitted. In 1933, Swede was runner up for the Golden Glove lightweight championship at Idaho State College. In 1934 he went all the way – first winning the lightweight Golden Gloves championship at Idaho State College with five straight knockouts, then going on to win the Intermountain Golden Gloves championship at Salt Lake City. At that time there were five states in the Intermountain group – Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Montana and Wyoming – so it meant really hitting a lick to take the championship. (In 1935, Swede didn't fight, and the guy he'd beat in '34 took the championship – so Swede could probably have taken the title two years in a row.)

(Years later, Swede acted as referee for boxing bouts at Meridian high school and used to get a kick out of hearing disgruntled fans say, "What does that knot-head know about boxing – he's a druggist.")

But boxing wasn't Elden's only interest at college. There was a gal named Mary Julia Peters, who was a freshman when Swede was a sophomore. The romance got off to a rough start. In a dining room at the college one day, somebody was telling Mary about a brute of a sophomore who was giving the frosh a bad time with his hazing. "There the brute is now," the gal told Mary. "The blond fellow, over at that other table." The guy she was talking about was sitting next to Swede, but since Swede was the blondest of the two, Mary figured he was the campus bully. She was sure of it the next day, when she heard Swede chewing some frosh out for not wearing his green dink. "Boy, did she tell me off!" Swede said. "I figured she must be majoring in English – all the words she used." Swede claims he's still trying to convince Mary he wasn't the freshmen's scourge at ISC. He's

had a lot of time to do it in, too. Today -- Thursday, October 24 -- Elden and Mary are celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary! But we're getting ahead of the story -- let's go back to those college days again. Swede had started out as major in agriculture, with a minor in entomology (the study of insects). He'd sort of planned to become a bug-chaser for a living, concentrating on agricultural pests. Part of the study included work with insecticides. Swede got so interested in that phase of entomology that one of the college officials, Dean Leonard, suggested he change to studying pharmacy. Swede agreed -- partly, he says, because it meant an extra year of being at college with Mary. That was in 1935 and Elden graduated in 1937 with a bachelor of science degree in pharmacy.

Exactly one day after he passed the state board examination and got his pharmacist's license, he was on duty at his first job -- a drug store in Elko, Nevada. From there he was transferred to another pharmacist position at Ontario, Oregon. That fall, on October 24, 1937 -- exactly 20 years ago today -- Elden and Mary were married in the Methodist church at Idaho Falls.

Idaho Falls was Mary's home town. Her father, T. R. Peters, has been city purchasing agent there since May 23, 1927 -- and was honored at a banquet this year in recognition of his 30 years of service to date.

There was no lingering around for a lengthy honeymoon -- Swede says he left the job Saturday night and was back at work Monday morning. It was easy to trace his travels in those days -- he was driving a 1930 jalopy that burned five quarts of oil between Boise and Pocatello. According to Swede, "It used to look like those news-reel pictures of a battleship laying down a smoke screen."

From Ontario, the Boices moved to Boise, where Elden worked at the Whitehead Pharmacy then at the Whitehouse Pharmacy -- located on the present site of Owyhee Hotel's "Carnival Room"

That year brought the birth of the Boice's first child -- a daughter, Sandra, born September 9, 1938. Sandra is now Mrs. Lowell Bennett, living in Boise, where her husband is a mechanic for the Air National Guard. The Boice family then moved to Nampa, where Swede was pharmacist at the Penny Wise drug store until 1944.

Elden & Mary have a special reason for remembering New Years Day in '44. It turned out to be the birth date of their son, Ted, who is now an eighth grade student at Meridian junior high school. Ted's arrival drew a lot of attention -- he was the first New Year's baby born in 1944 in either Ada or Canyon County. And wouldn't you know -- 1944 was the only year anyone can remember when the merchants hadn't offered a big jack-pot of prizes for the first New Year's baby! Swede isn't complaining, though. As he says, "Mary and I got a real prize -- Ted himself."

Four months to a day after Ted's birth -- May 1, 1944 -- Swede bought a half interest in the Songer Pharmacy in Meridian. Two years later, he bought the other half interest from his partner, Lloyd Songer, becoming full owner of the business in 1946. For bookkeeping purposes, and to establish a credit rating, Swede kept the same name for the store until 1947 -- when he changed it to its present name, Meridian Drug Center. The business expanded until the space was inadequate, so last year Elden purchased the building from his former partner's widow, Mrs. Songer, who still lives in Meridian. He immediately began an expansion and modernization program, doubling the floor space, by taking over an adjoining office that had been used by Oren Laing and Kenneth Edmiston.

Other modern improvements and alterations brought a total tab of \$15,000.00 for the remodeling program that was completed within the past few weeks.

One of Swede's present staff at the store is Bill Irons, a pharmacist whose experience includes five years at a drug store in Anchorage, Alaska. Other staff members are Charlene (Mrs. Bob L) Smith; Don Mummert and Theron Burgess – plus, of course, Mrs. Boice's help. In addition, Swede drafts the services of any relatives who happen through (he'd talked Mary's father into lending a hand Tuesday afternoon when we were interviewing him for this column.)

He'll probably have to do some real talking if he ever gets his brother's wife, Althea, to help out again. She got drafted to help out this summer, and was on duty when a weird character stole one watch, then returned later in the day and tried to walk off with an even dozen wrist watches. "One thing," Swede grinned, "she can't say the job was boring."

This is the part of the "Man About . . . column where we usually list the subject's talents and hobbies. But if we tried to include all of Swede's, there'd be little room for any other news in the paper. You see, Grandma turned out to be quite a prophetess when she suggested including a name from the "Wizard" books. In fact "Wizard" just about describes Swede's talents in more fields than you'd believe. To name just a few – he's a professionally competent photographer. He's an engraver. He's a competent repairer of watches, radios, clocks, or what-have-you. He's a minerology hobbyist (or "rock hound"). He can get by as a painter, carpenter, tile-layer and other crafts. On top of that, he's a boat-builder. He started out by building a hydro-plane craft this spring – using two sheets of plywood, some pieces of 1x8, and a lot of ingenuity. Now four other boat-fans in the area have boats of the same design– his son-in-law, Lowell Bennett; Marvin Bodine, George Hiatt and Joe Hill.

"Fan" is a mild word for those five. One of 'em will get the boating urge, and start phoning the others – the next thing you know, the five boats are whipping around on the Lucky Peak waters at speeds up to 50 miles per hour.

Swede is now planning to build a sixth version of the speedy craft – it seems son Ted has become so competent a speed-boater that Swede has a tough time getting his turn at the wheel.

Public interests, as well as private hobbies and talents, are a big part of Elden's history in Meridian. He was a member of the school board for several terms, including two as chairman, just before the school district was reorganized. In 1946 or '47, he served as chairman of the community's annual Red Cross drive.

He also served a total of eight years on the Meridian City Council under Mayors Voris Botkin and Arthur Postlethwaite and the first term under Mayor Don Storey. His duties included being president of the council as part of his assignment. Elden is a member of the Masons, Scottish Rite, Shriners and Order of the Eastern Star. He also belongs to the Meridian Chamber of Commerce, the Meridian Athletic Association, the Jaycee's Booster Club and the Idaho State Pharmaceutical Association.

As you know, Swede does a lot of kidding, so we'll probably embarrass him with any serious comment. But in addition to the accomplishments, there's a major one that really belongs at the top of the list: Elden Ozman "Swede" Boice, "Man about Meridian," is undoubtedly one of the best known, best liked, and most respected persons in this entire community. In that field, as he was in boxing, he is a real champion.