

"I really enjoy life." That sums up Merle's philosophy. And, if you know him, you know that he really means it. Probably a big part of Merle's good natured friendliness comes from the years he spent as owner of a general store in a small Kansas town. During those years, he was a personal friend of almost every customer he served. Nowadays, he might not know every customer personally, but there's still that same note of friendship in his greetings to all.

Merle was born in Phillips County, Kansas, February 14, 1905. His parents were Mr. and Mrs. William A. Meyer, who had a 720 acre farm on which they raised cattle and grain. We asked Merle where his birthplace was, and he said: "Why, everybody know where Phillips County it - It's just outside of Speed, Kansas!"

Merle has three brothers and one sister living - Vic, who's also a Conoco dealer, in Alliance, Nebraska; Max, who's with the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation at Bonney Dam, Colorado; Clifford, who's in construction and excavation work at Meeker, Colorado; Mrs. Vivina Diegnan, who's a nurse in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

For his elementary education Merle attended the High Prairie country school near his birthplace. For high school, he went to Logan, Kansas, about 10 miles away. During the first couple of years, he boarded and roomed at private homes there. By his junior year, he and a pal decided they were "men about town" enough to do their own batching.

One thing, Merle finds the range in Idaho climate pretty tame, compared to those years in Kansas. In summer, it got as high as 117 above - in winter, it dropped down to a brisk 20-below.

During high school years, he started his general store experience. It was a "part time" job - which in those days meant you worked after school on week-days until 9:00 or 10:00 at night - and on Saturdays you worked until midnight. Pay, of course, was in line with the short hours. Five dollars a week.

Somehow, though, he also found time to take part in athletics - and was on the school teams for baseball, basketball and football. In basketball, the team was good enough to be a runner - up in the district championship finals; and in baseball, he was one of the ace pitchers. Athletics didn't end with graduation, as each Kansas town had its own teams. Merle's record at school earned him a berth on both the basketball and baseball teams of the hometown.

After graduating, he worked that summer on a full-time basis at the general store. His boss evidently liked his work, because he made Merle manager of a second general store that he'd bought at the nearby little town of Glade, Kansas. Right off Merle was named as the acting postmaster, at the age of 19. He knew there'd been a town squabble about the job, so he refused the appointment - missing the chance to set what might have been an all-time record for the youngest U. S. Postmaster.

Merle started his new job at the store on a partnership basis. Three years later he took on another partnership - this time for life. October 16, 1927, he married Leona Farrington. When we asked Merle to name the event that he considered the luckiest break in all his life, he said: "When I met Leona." In turn, Mrs. Meyer leaves no doubt of her approval of Merle.

To most of us, 1933 is remembered as the depths of the depression - to Merle and his wife, it's the year they bought out their partner and took over full ownership of the



general store at Glade. Not that they didn't feel the effects of the depression. Proof of that is in some of the prices they remember from those years. They bought their eggs for 6 cents a dozen; bacon squares sold at two pounds for 25 cents; good material for women's dresses was 19 cents a yard; and quality coffee sold for around 29 cents a pound. Even then, their customers often settled their monthly bills by bringing in calves, bacon squares, or other goods.

During the second year after they started the store - September 15, 1935 - their first son was born, William LeRoy, Leroy is now a civil engineering student at the University of Idaho, where he expects to finish next year. The Meyers now have another son - Micky Lee, born March 8, 1951, who started at the Meridian grade school this year.

Merle has taken an interest in school affairs even before LeRoy's birth. In 1932, he had become a member of the school board - a job that lasted for 13 years and that included being treasurer for the board. Merle found time on the side to be an active member of the Masonic Lodge at Phillipsburg, Kansas. He held every chair in the lodge, including that of Master and Past Master. He and his wife are also Past Patron and Past Matron of the Order of Eastern Star.

Merle had managed to duck out on the teen-age postal appointment, but by 1938, he figured he was old enough, so took on the job as postmaster fourth-class, with his store also acting as the local postoffice. Holding an appointive office must have made him conscious of other offices - in 1941 he was elected as a State Representative to the Kansas legislature. As it turned out, winning the political office was finally to result in the Meyers coming to Meridian. Merle had promised his wife a vacation trip if he were elected. When the votes were counted and Merle had won, Mrs. Meyer said she'd use the trip to visit her brother, Cecil Farrington.

Cecil was then, and still is, a cabinet-maker in Meridian. Merle and his wife, and Leona's mother had visited here in 1936. When she came back from the election-sponsored trip, and reported that Meridian still seemed as nice as it had on the first visit, the future was practically decided. Merle completed his term in the Kansas legislature in 1943. Two years later, they agreed that Meridian was the place to go to escape the Kansas wind, heat and grasshoppers.

It's easy for Merle to remember the date on which they sold the store at Glade. He's started at the store December 7, 1924, and they sold it December 7, 1945 - exactly 21 years later to the day. They arrived in Meridian, expecting to move into a furnished home they'd arranged to rent. But another house-seeking tenant has offered a higher rent, and the house was taken. There was the same house-shortage then that there still is, so the Meyers solved the problem by buying a home at 1210 2 1/2 Street, in Meridian. Two years later they moved to their present home, a rose-colored stucco home at 120 East State. A member of their household for the past 20 years has been Leona's mother, Mrs. Mary E. Farrington, who will be 90 years old this October 12.

During the first few years here, Merle was employed by various companies - including Rutledge Plumbing, Keller's Market, Donner and Morrison lumber companies and the Co-Op Oil Supply. In 1953 he bought, from the Co-Op Oil company, the service station he now operates as the Meyer Oil Co. Two years later he changed to a Conoco franchise, and also began bulk delivery of the Conoco products; running the business on a "home-owned, home-operated" basis.

Merle is a member of the Meridian Chamber of Commerce, the Jaycee's Booster Club, and Modern Woodmen of America. The family are members of the Methodist church.

As mentioned earlier, Merle summed up his philosophy by saying: "I enjoy life." He added that the years of meeting and serving the public have taught him more than he could have learned from even the best of schools. Meeting him, you know that one thing he has learned well is how to meet even a stranger on a basis of friendship-and how to be the kind of a person you want as a friend.