

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Growing up in Orrington, Maine**

The depression was still making times tough for most people. My Father was again out of work. The family moved to Maine to be near my Mothers' family. My Grandfather was a Selectman for the Town of Orrington, seven miles south of Bangor. They lived at Orrington Center. To the east about a mile was the village of East Orrington and to the west another mile were three villages along the Penobscott River. We rented a large house up on the hill next to the Methodist Church, at Orrington Conner's, for \$10 a month.



*An early picture of home in Orrington*

Fortunately for the family my Mother, secured an engagement as soloist for the Sunday service of the largest church in Bangor. They paid her \$10 a week. She had to go to town on Saturday for a rehearsal and again on Sunday to sing. My Father returned to Boston to look for work.

#### ***My First Dime***

For breakfast, quite often, my mother would make pancakes or as we use to call them flapjacks. I was busy eating mine, when I spoke up and said "look there is a dime in my pancake." Sure enough, there it was, a nice shinny silver dime. So, the next question was - how did a coin get in the flapjack? Thinking for a moment, Mother can up with the answer. Each day, a neighbor who

had cows, would deliver a quart of farm fresh milk. We had to put out yesterday's empty milk bottle and leave a dime in it to pay for the new milk. Of course they were suppose to remove the money and wash the bottle before refilling it and delivering it to us or one of the few nearby families. This time they did not take the dime out. And I hope they did not forget to wash the glass bottle, either. The milk was used by my Mother to make our breakfast with a dime in the pancake.

### ***Thanksgiving we almost missed***

We had a charge account at the local general store, down over the hill. They had everything from nails to a pound of hamburger for twenty-five cents. But at times, the account ran up too high, so we would have to wait until Mother got paid again. This Thanksgiving was one of those times. We had only potatoes from last summer's garden and maybe apples from the orchard. I think my mother was going to make baked potatoes with milk gravy for our dinner. No turkey, not even hot dogs. Not much for which to look forward.

Much to our surprise, Ferd Bowden, who owned the general store drove his Ford Model A, into our yard early Thanksgiving morning and walked in with a big box of food and a nice plump chicken, his Thanksgiving gift to us.

I remember we walked out to Grams and Gramps taking the chicken and some of the food, to have Thanksgiving Dinner with them. This was a true Thanksgiving!

### ***My Mother composed a special Thanksgiving Grace***

Dear God, We Thank Thee For Thy Love,  
For Flowers That Bloom, For Stars Above,  
For Loved Ones Who Are Far Apart,  
We Ask Thy Blessing On Each One,  
And Oh, Dear God, We Ask For Peace,  
Over All The World, To Bring Release,  
From Anxious Fears and Pain & Care,  
*God Bless All People Everywhere*

### ***Renting the house***

We rented our house for about two years. This was the depth of the depression and Dad was out of work. Everything was for sale and no one could afford to buy any property. Probably with the help of Andrew's brother, Uncle Jack, who had a big job as V.P. of Sales with a large paper company in Ohio, we managed to buy the house from the bank. My Father had put his younger brother through Harvard, when my father was making big money in the hotel business. So, I am sure Jack felt he should help Andrew.

### ***Buying our home from the bank***

The house was for sale for \$2,500. So, Dad talked to the bank. They were very interested in selling. Dad, said to them, I understand you have sold this house twice before and had to foreclose and take it back each time. How much did you get the first time? They said \$500. And the next time? \$300. And we have rented it for two years, so we have paid you \$240. "Yes" was the answer. Taking the asking price and deducting what they had already received, Dad offered \$1,500 and bought the house.

### ***Fixing up the house***

Dad was still unemployed, so he stayed home for a while to renovate the house. First he tore off the front porch, and then a small sun-room, by the living room, was removed and replaced with a new window. The large barn was cut down to a one-car garage. We never had an automobile, but at least we had a garage. From the kitchen to the garage, was a long shed, Dad removed a section along the front to make a covered porch. This was where Mother would hang her laundry on rainy days and it would still dry. These changes show up in some of the later pictures above.

### ***Wood burning stoves***

One winter, when Dad was home, unemployed, times were pretty tough. One of our neighbors, who lived up the street, had a large wood lot of birch trees about a half-mile from us. They gave permission for Dad to cut down some of these trees for firewood.

We had two wood burning stoves, one in the living room and the cook stove in the kitchen. Dad would walk up the street with the children's sled, cut down a tree. Then he would cut the trunk, which was 4 to 6 inches thick, into four-foot lengths, put them on the sled and haul them home. Back at the house, he would again cut the logs into firewood. They had to be dried out in the oven all day, before they could be used the next day to keep the fires burning. This was all the heat we had in the winter, which could drop down to 20 degrees below zero, on many cold days.

### ***Load of can goods***

At some point, about 1937, Dad secured a position as Assistant Manager of the Crown Hotel, Providence R.I. At lease we had a little more money, now. I remember Dad would ship home to us, twenty or thirty cases of canned goods; peaches, pears, fruit cocktail, beans, peas, and other vegetables. We made a place next to the stairs going down to the cellar, for all these canned goods. For many months or longer, each day, Mother would send Bob or myself down to get a few cans for meals. We sure enjoyed the plentiful food, which Dad had bought at wholesale and shipped a couple of times to us.



***Crown Hotel***

### ***The Hurricane of September 21<sup>st</sup> 1938***

In the fall of 1938, Dad was still the Assistant Manager of the Crown Hotel in Providence, Rhode Island. The Hotel Manager was ill at the time and Dad had taken over the complete hotel operation. Reports came through that a very bad Hurricane was headed for New England. The hotel made all preparations to ride out the storm. Very heavy flooding followed, which disrupted all

electrical service in the whole city. This meant that the hotel, following the storm, was out of business. However the hotel was now full, with *power & light line men*, sent in from many neighboring states to assist with the recovery. My Father got an idea. He knew that outside the hotel, down the middle of the street was the trolley car line. Of course the cars were not running after the dozen-foot floods. He asked the Lineman Foreman, “could you hook into the electrical trolley line and get electrical power for the hotel?” “Why not was the answer?” So, with this brilliant idea, the Crown Hotel in the center of town was the only business with power, for weeks. Dad sent home to us in Maine the Sunday pictorial with hundreds of hurricane and flood pictures.

### ***The depression was a hard lesson***

These years, growing up in Maine during the depression made a lasting impression on me. Work hard, be honest, stay out of debt, don't trust the stock market, and don't invest in insurance, and take care of your family, always have a base, meaning have a home. Because of the Florida Crash in 1926 and the later stock market crash of 1929, first my father and later my grandparents lost all their savings and could not keep up their insurance.

### ***Debts and Bankruptcy***

It took Andrew Lane until 1937 to pay off all his debts, down to the last \$500. Then he had to declare bankruptcy, as the holder of his last debt had filed a garnishment lien on his salary, and he needed this new job and his salary to support his family.

### ***Farming country***

Today you could call the town of Orrington, the suburbs, but at the time, it was farming country. Several neighbors had large farms with cows, and horses, chickens, etc. One had a pond to freeze ice. Each winter they would cut the large blocks of ice and stack them with sawdust high up in the ice-house.

### ***Ice Skating***

The young people would go ice skating on this pond before

they cut the ice, in the early part of the winter. Our other favorite skating place was up the road about a half a mile, just past the railroad tracks, where there was a swampy place that froze over. We had to clear away the snow, before we could ice skate, but it was a nice out of the way place for the kids to skate and safe as the water was only less than a foot deep.



***The 4-H Club, the leader was the Minister***

Our neighbor across the street would plow an extra ten rows of his garden for us. Bob and I both were in the 4-H Club as young farmers. We are on the far right in the photo of the bean field.



***Roger and Bob by their summer camp***

During the summer, Mother would order a cord of slab wood (the bark covered side-ends of a tree, before the rest was sawed into lumber). This we would use to build a cabin shack with windows and doors, bunk beds, roof and all. This would keep us busy all summer and in the end, she would have the lumber sawed up for firewood. We did this each year for several summers. One time we built a boat on land, instead. It had a mast and flag.

We would attend summer church school, next door, at the Methodest Church. We would go to the fair grounds, up the street, when a carnival was in town. In the winter there was ice skating right in our front yard or sledding down the hill towards the post office. One of my jobs was to get two pails of drinking water each day, from the town well, across from the post office.

Two miles south, at South Orrington was the three-room elementary school, Bob and I would attend each year, through the eighth grade. The school bus started another two miles north, at North Orrington, picked us all up at the general store and post office, run by Mr. Bowden.

The school had a Principal, Mr. Hall and two old maid sisters, as teachers, the Clark girls. My best recollections are of the three years I spent, sixth, seventh and eighth grade years with Mr. Hall who was the teacher of these three grades in one room.

I was a very studious introverted young man. Bob was gregaeous and always getting into trouble. Some-one donated a set of encyclopedia books to the school. They built a tri-corner bookshelf in the back of the room for these books, next to the windows. When we, as students, were not being taught, only one third of the twenty odd children would have a class at one time. The others were supposed to be studying or reading. So it became my habit to get a volume of the encyclopedia and continue to read it from front to back. I guess that is why they called me the *“professor”*.

I was always a wiz at math. When I was in the sixth grade I watched the teacher instruct the eighth grade students in algebra. He noticed this on my part and was happy to let me take the test at the end. I got an A, of course. So, as I remember, the next year he gave me a book on collage prep trigonometry and a special test at the end of the period. Another A to my credit. On the third year this special instruction continued with books on geometry and high school calculus. I don't remember how I did with these subjects, but I guess I did ok.

The town of Orrington, had no high school, so when you graduated from the eighth grade, the Town would give you the choice of attending ether Brewer High, just north of the town or Bangor High School, on the other side of the Penobscott River, north of Brewer.

Brewer was known as an easier school, so most of my class went there. If you went to Bangor, you had to attend a Junior High for the 9th grade and then go on to Bangor High School. I took the more learned path.



***Roger off to Jr. High in Bangor***

I could get a ride in the morning with a neighbor who worked as a mechanic at a garage in Bangor. When school let out, I could take a trolley car through Brewer.

Now I was four miles from home. Most of the time I would hitch-hike. But on more than a few occasions I had to walk all the way home. In the winter sometimes it was twenty below zero too.

The first year at Bangor High School, I was in the ROTC. On Armistice Day, there was a parade in Bangor. I marched with my class wearing my ROTC uniform.



***Roger in ROTC uniform***

The next year, my Father accepted a new position at a N.Y.A. training facility (National Youth Administration) a government run project to train unemployed young men at the end of the depression. Quoddy is near the town of Eastport, Maine which is the Eastern most point in the United States.

The tides are very high in this area, as much as twenty feet, between high tide and low tide. The U.S. government had started an energy project during the depression to harness these tides for the generation of electrical power. Huge dams had been thrown up across the bay. So when the tides went out the water could be diverted to electric turbines to generate electricity.

The project never really got beyond the dam building phase, then the site was turned into a training camp for young men, who were to be taught the building trades, carpentry, electrical, sheet metal, etc.

Dad was the head of the Food Commissary and had to supervise the feeding of thousands of meals every day.



***Roger, Andrew, Bob, Flora Bell***

The family was once again all together on a fine summer day, outside our new cottage at Quoddy, Maine. The time was 1939.



***Andrew H. Lane - Quoddy, Maine***

I was with the family for the summer, but I was set to go to school in Bangor, for my first year of high school. So as not to disrupt my education; they boarded me in Bangor with two nice old ladies, friends of the family, while the family was at Quoddy.



### ***My Mother with her good friends***

They had a home at 182 Pine Street, Bangor. Daisy Belden lived upstairs and her friend Ola Scribner downstairs. I had a nice bedroom all to myself and took my meals with them also. For my school holidays, I would take the bus up to Eastport and visit with Mom and Dad. Bob lived at Quoddy and was going to the local school. Ms.Scribner and Ms. Belden drove up for the weekend for a visit with my Mother and to take me up and back to Bangor. Other times, I would go by bus for these vacation visits.

This arrangement worked for about two years. I can remember I was in Bangor on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7th, 1941, as we heard all about the bombing on the radio. It was a Sunday, and I had been out for a walk. When I got back the ladies told me to start listening to the radio.



### ***Roger and Bob by a bus at Quoddy, Maine***

## ***Eleanor Roosevelt , Bob the photographer***

One day in 1941, Eleanor Roosevelt visited Quoddy, Maine. The time was just before World War II. My Father Andrew, was the head of the commissary, which was feeding thousands of young men at the N.Y.A. Training Facility.



As Bob remembered, this particular day, the Presidents' wife Eleanor Roosevelt was paying a visit to this Government Facility. A large crowd had assembled to see her and hear her talk. Bob was there too. He had a small camera with him, which he had been playing with, to make believe, take pictures. The press was there and their photographers were taking many pictures of Mrs. Roosevelt. When she finished, her escorts started to move her away. Mrs. Roosevelt, being the kind of woman she was famous for being, held them back, saying "I see a small boy with a camera, I would like to give him a chance to take a picture too". Bob was excited and although he knew he had no film in his camera, stood up and pretended to take a picture of Eleanor Roosevelt that day. The picture shown, although taken by a press photographer, would have been like the picture Bob would have taken.

Shortly after I started at Bangor High School for the second year, my Father started a new position in Greenfield, Mass. WWII was in progress, most young men were either joining the military or being drafted into the army. Businesses were doing the best they could, without these men. As a result, people like my Father, older, but with excellent experience were again being employed in much better positions. Dad was hired as the Manager of the Mansion House, a downtown hotel of a 100 rooms. Mother thought for health reasons, she would like to spend the winter back in St. Petersburg, Florida, with Bob. So, I joined my Dad in Greenfield and transferred to the Greenfield High School.