

1-Elwood Babbitt: The Early Years, Mostly In His Own Words

By ROGER LeCOURS

Author's Note: Note: Babbitt spent the last few years of his life in Vermont. For a time, he and his wife, Daria, lived in Vershire and then they moved to a small bungalow on a beautiful hillside in Cabot. This is a town close to the so-called Northeast Kingdom, a very special region. I already knew about Babbitt through the writings of Charles Hapgood. I was delighted for the opportunity to know him personally. We spent many days together during which he recounted the story of his life and mediumship. I am a journalist and I found the story of his life to be very compelling. Much of what he told me has not been previously published. This excerpt is about his birth and early life.

Chapter One

Ancestry and Birth of A Medium

Roy Stearns Babbitt and his wife, Alma Singer Babbitt, were among the young couples enjoying the good life in Orange, Massachusetts, following World War I. It was the beginning of the 1920s, the period between the end of the war and the stock market crash; often referred to as the "jazz age." The Babbitts were not among those who were partying with flappers or illegal bathtub gin but they were basking in the beauties of the simple life with family, friends and neighbors. Roy and Alma had met at a USO dance in New Orleans, Louisiana where he was assigned to a U.S. Navy port. He was a mechanic in the engine room of a ship that carried American troops to and from ports in Britain and France. This military assignment was very preoccupying to Babbitt. He did not go to the USO dance with the intention of establishing even

a short-term relationship, let alone a lifetime love. Babbitt was just "one of the boys" standing in a corner of the USO hall when his eyes fell upon Alma Singer, a graceful black-haired beauty with a face of flawless complexion and dark brown eyes. She stood at five feet, five inches and was very petite. Babbitt was instantly smitten. Without a word to his buddies, he found himself floating toward her. Babbitt asked her to dance and she accepted with a coy smile. They were in each other's arms for the entire evening. He called her "My belle of New Orleans" from that night on. They felt that they had always known one another. In Alma Singer, Babbitt saw innocence, radiant charm, and a sense of spiritual values. At first, Alma Singer was more intrigued than emotionally conquered by the dapper, smooth-talking sailor who had a witty retort for every remark uttered within his range of hearing. His gray eyes twinkled and his laughter was sonorous and long. He wore his civilian chapeau at a cocky tilt. His suit seemed too bulky for his skinny frame. At five feet, eight inches, Babbitt did not fit the popular image of "tall, dark and handsome." However, Alma Singer soon learned that beneath Babbitt's endless humor and gabbiness, there was a tender heart and a mind that was deeply spiritual and sensitive. She was touched by his sincerity and his dreams of raising a family. He told her about his upbringing on the family farm in Northfield Plains, Massachusetts, and how he planned to return there after his tour of duty with the Navy. During their courtship which could only take place during his stopovers in the Louisiana port, Alma Singer came to realize she too had been in love since their first meeting. When he proposed, she immediately accepted. They had a small wedding ceremony attended by Alma's family and her closest friends. The trip from Massachusetts was too far for Roy's parents, Rinaldo and Ella (Stearns) Babbitt. They decided to wait until their son completed his Navy assignment to meet their new daughter-in-law. Roy was also anxious to introduce Alma to his sister, Una Mae Babbitt Goodwin who lived in Tampa, Florida, with her

husband, Elbridge.

Before Roy Babbitt's duty with the Navy was finished, his parents decided to give up the rigors of farm life. Born in 1851, Rinaldo Babbitt was past the normal age of retirement. His wife was four years younger. They sold the farm and bought a three-tenement house at 43 Mechanic Street in Orange. Rinaldo Babbitt then became self-employed as a painter of houses and barns. He had enjoyed every day as a farmer. He was spiritually attuned to the soil and to the seasonal changes of the New England weather. He was an expert agriculturalist who knew when to plant his crops and when to plan on the harvest. Babbitt loved his cows, horses, pigs, dogs, and cats. He treated them like dear friends. Ella Babbitt also loved the farm. She liked her walks through the woods and pastures. On a beautiful summer day when all the household duties were finished, she could be found on the porch, doing her crocheting or knitting. The Babbitts were very sentimental about the farm. They had raised their son and daughter there. Una Mae was born in 1888 and was followed by Roy in 1895. All of the Babbitts had found peace and contentment at the farm in Northfield Plains. As much as they had loved the farm, Rinaldo and Ella were ready for the changes in their lives when they made the decision to sell out. They looked forward to the adventure of living in Orange. Becoming a painter was not difficult for Babbitt because he had always liked to paint. He approached his new occupation as though it was an art form to be practiced in attunement with nature and spirituality. He was fascinated by the mixture of different colors and he saw "harmony" in blending them just as a musical composer blends harmonic notes. Babbitt said that "God's healing force" was in the harmony of colors. Babbitt was a tall man at six feet-three inches but his serious face and slender body gave him an aesthetic appearance. He spoke softly and there were no emotional excesses in his personality. Even when he intended to convey humor, he spoke in a very dry, whimsical manner. Babbitt was a good

man who focused most of his attention on his family and farm chores. He never believed in organized religion but he was a deeply philosophical man who did a lot of meditating. He felt that his working skills were maximized during "the quiet, vibrational hours" from five o'clock to nine o'clock in the morning. He said that standing alone upon a ladder, against the side of a house or barn, was very conducive to contemplation. In the quiet solitude of that elevated station, Babbitt became totally absorbed. His mind was clear and his breathing was synchronized with the graceful movement of his painting arm which was akin to that of a highly-skilled violinist. During those hours of peaceful vibration, Babbitt's mind soared and the cap of materiality was lifted, allowing his spirit to peer into Infinitude. Babbitt was a taciturn man who revealed very little of himself. Only his wife and children were aware of his mystical life.

Ella Babbitt was a petite woman. She seemed short when standing next to her husband because her head only came up to his chest. She had a friendly face with expressive eyes mirroring friendliness and contentment. Her slender girlhood figure broadened in later years but her face never had a wrinkle. Ella was always quiet and reserved. As she matured, she became somewhat reclusive due to a steady loss of hearing which made her uncomfortable in social situations. After she became totally deaf, she spent virtually all of her time in meditation while doing household tasks or needlework. Only her family ever witnessed her moments of reverie when her hands continued to work but her glazed-over eyes stared into a world not seen by the physical senses. Her life gradually evolved into a very private one which she mainly shared with her husband. When she was older she suffered from osteoporosis, a disease which most frequently affects the spinal column, causing backaches and rounded shoulders. Because she was hunched over, she had to bend her neck upwards to see people. This virtually eliminated eye contact with others who were less likely to approach her at social gatherings, knowing she also

suffered from the hearing problem. Her husband was very understanding and he did all he could to limit her isolation. However, she gradually withdrew from social conversation unless others approached her. Since Ella and Rinaldo Babbitt had such a powerful spiritual connection between them, they were able to communicate telepathically.

The spiritual side of Roy Babbitt's mind and personality was profoundly influenced by the quiet vibrations of his parents although he did not inherit his father's physical attributes nor his introverted personality. Like his father, Roy Babbitt was a deep thinker. He also possessed some powers of clairvoyance and direct voice. These psychic abilities were valuable to him in his work and in his relationships with others. Soon after his marriage, Roy Babbitt learned that his wife also possessed psychic abilities. However, she suppressed them because they made her nervous. At times, she saw things that weren't supposed to be there, such as shadows moving about a darkened room. Roy Babbitt suspected that the conditioning of Alma's Catholic upbringing made her feel guilty about believing in paranormal happenings not explained in Church teaching. In later years, Alma Babbitt had an experience which thoroughly frightened her. She resolved then to completely block out all acceptances of paranormal possibilities. One evening when the house was dimly lighted, she went to retrieve something out of a closet. Peering up in the dark she reached for the light fixture chain when the vision of an arm and hand suddenly flashed overhead. The ghostly hand was clutching an old-fashioned candleholder. She lurched backward, crying hysterically. Roy Babbitt came running from the kitchen. He held and comforted her for more than an hour before she was able to calm herself. He assured her there was nothing to fear. He explained that a friend in spirit had only tried to help her. Alma remembered that incident for the rest of her life. She never wanted to hear stories about ghosts or psychic happenings.

After Roy Babbitt was discharged from the Navy, he and his bride took over the bottom

apartment of his parents' house at 43 Mechanic Street. Alma Babbitt never saw much of her New Orleans family again but managed contact through letters. She felt closest to her sister, Lillian, who came to visit her in Orange on at least one occasion. Alma had another sister, Henrietta. Roy Babbitt had little in common with his New Orleans in-laws and neither side made any effort to bridge their cultural and religious differences. Roy Babbitt called himself a Universalist but he seldom attended church services. Babbitt liked to paraphrase a famous quotation from Thomas Paine who said, "The world is my country. All mankind are my brethren and to do good is my religion." Babbitt's version of Paine's axiom was, "The world is my church. To do good is my religion." Babbitt thought the Singers were "too religious. He complained that they wore the badge of Catholicism on their sleeves.

On November 30, 1920, Alma Babbitt gave birth to their first son. He was a beautiful baby. They named him Robert. He brought great joy to their lives. Somehow, Roy Babbitt knew early on that his firstborn would not be spiritually inclined and that he would grow up to be a man of the world, seeking material success and honor. After Robert's birth, the Babbitts decided to renovate their living quarters and they temporarily moved into the upstairs tenement of a Summer Street house owned by Louis and Edith Plotkin. The Plotkins owned a furniture store. The Babbitts returned to 43 Mechanic Street following the renovations but remained lifelong friends of the Plotkins. Less than a year after she gave birth to Robert, Alma Babbitt and her husband were awaiting the birth of their second child. They were still living in the Plotkin tenement. Alma suddenly went into labor on the night of Nov. 25, 1921, two months before the baby's expected arrival date. Florence Ryan, a registered nurse who was a very gifted caregiver, had been at her side throughout the night. It was 5:30 a.m. and a single light bulb illuminated the room. An early winter snowstorm was raging. The wind was howling and snow was slapping

against the windows. Roy Babbitt was also at the bedside, gently reassuring his wife. Ryan was a strong, robust woman with blond hair and a very kindly face. Her voice was loving and melodious and she never uttered a cross or impatient word. The Babbitts placed great confidence in her. Ryan had prepped the expectant mother and now they awaited the arrival of Dr. Kirk Alexander who lived only a short distance away on Grove Street. Exhausted and drenched with perspiration from her ordeal, Alma still managed a smile for her husband.

"Now don't you worry, Alma," Roy said. "This baby has already survived one wreck and he will come out fine and healthy." When Alma was about three months along in her pregnancy, she was riding with her husband in their Model T-Ford when he turned the steering wheel too sharply to turn onto another street. The car rolled over. Neither of them was injured and Dr. Alexander found no harm to the unborn child. Despite the doctor's reassurances and her husband's unfailing optimism, Alma could never forget that mishap and the effect it might have on her unborn baby. As she awaited the birth of her second child, her firstborn was asleep in the bedroom across the hall. Dr. Alexander arrived soon after the call from the nurse. The physician entered quietly and quickly removed his suit jacket. He rolled up his shirt sleeves and washed his arms and hands in the water that Ryan had heated on the wood-burning furnace in the living room. Then he asked Babbitt to step back. Dr. Alexander smiled at Alma while taking a deep breath and he approached the bedside. Roy Babbitt noticed the physician's countenance was serious and pensive. Dr. Alexander was a strong young man standing nearly six feet tall but he had a very old-looking face. In Babbitt's mind, it conjured up thoughts of the Biblical Methuselah who was said to have lived 969 years. His voice was deep and resonant. Babbitt and Ryan watched the doctor very intently as he gently probed the lower part of Alma's body. Married to a beautiful woman, Dr. Alexander had two young children of his own. After a few

minutes he stood up saying, "i wish this baby had been willing to wait at least a few more weeks but it will be very soon." He and Ryan had delivered many babies together and they worked very smoothly. They positioned themselves for the birth while talking softly to Alma. Babbitt went down on one knee beside Alma. He was holding her left hand and looking deeply into her eyes. He knew she was worried because this baby was arriving too early. Babbitt was worried too but he didn't want his wife to know it. Then there was a short period of silence between contractions. Alma broke the quiet, saying "Honey, would you say a prayer.....out loud?" Knowing that his wife hadn't completely abandoned her Catholic upbringing, Babbitt suspected that she recited a lot of Hail Marys to herself. Now she was asking him to join her."Why of course I will darling," he responded. Dr. Alexander nodded to Babbitt. Ryan moved closer and her arms touched the shoulders of both men. A circle of vibrational purpose was now established and Babbitt began to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven....." As the prayer ended, Alma's body was abruptly racked by the throes of her final contractions. The doctor's deep voice quietly intoned directions to Alma. At 6:05 a.m., Dr. Alexander drew out the child, calmly announcing, "Everything is fine Alma. You have another son. He's small and very wrinkled but all is well. Congratulations!" Babbitt let out a sigh of relief and embraced his wife. Alma raised her head in an effort to see her child. Turning quickly while cradling the baby, Dr. Alexander said, "Let Florence clean him up a bit while I wash up." Somewhat puzzled as to why the doctor was not immediately showing the baby to Alma, the nurse held out a clean white sheet to receive the child. Dr. Aexander cast a cautionary glance at her as he placed the baby on the sheet.

When she put the baby on a small table in a corner of the room, Ryan immediately understood the doctor's concern. Observing the tiny arms and spindly legs moving about, she thought the child looked quite normal but then she noticed his head. The pressure of the birthing

process had formed it into an elongated cone-like shape. "My God! It doesn't even look like a human head," Ryan thought to herself. Forcing a smile as she looked back over her shoulder, the nurse continued to wash the baby.

Summoning up a reassuring voice, she said, "It will be only a moment, Alma." Then Babbitt stepped over, extending his arms to take the child. With his back still to his wife, Babbitt's eyes met those of the nurse. His eyes reflected shock as he looked down at the baby but he recovered quickly. Pulling a section of the sheet over the upper part of the baby's head, Babbitt cooed happily, "Ah yes. he's a darling, Alma. He's going to be a great man someday, just like his big brother, Robert." He placed the baby in his wife's arms. "Now remember, He's a premature newborn and he hasn't taken on his ultimate shape yet," Dr. Alexander said. Alma beamed joyously as she received the child. Then she let out a horrified shriek. "Roy! Our baby is deformed! Look at his head!" Then she broke out in uncontrolled sobbing.

Dr. Alexander tried to console her. "Now Alma. Please be calm and maintain your strength. You need quiet rest. Babbitt stroked his wife's forehead.

"Alma, you must not worry so. Everything is going to be all right. The doctor knows," In truth, Dr. Alexander didn't know and now he was looking for Ryan to say something. "That's right Alma. A few years ago, I attended the birth of a child that was born with a head like your baby's. It took a few weeks but we were able to reshape it until it eventually was normal, she said.

The nurse was telling the truth about that other baby. However, that baby's head was not misshapen like this one. The doctor nudged Ryan. "Let's give Roy and Alma some time alone." Ryan followed the doctor out of the room, saying, "I'll be back in a few minutes. Now don't you worry, Alma, I'll come over every day and work with the baby. You'll see. Everything will be fine. Despite her hopeful tones, Ryan was not confident that she or anyone else could do much to

give the baby's head a normal appearance. However, in the following days and weeks she came to the Babbitt home almost every day. Relying solely on her own intuition, faith and unbounding love, she softly massaged and manipulated the baby's head, applying only slight pressure. She did this many times at every visit. She knew that she needed to complete this process before the newborn's skull finally closed. Gradually, the cone-shape receded to a nearly normal appearance. The change was barely noticeable at first but after a while, friends and neighbors began to remark on the "miracle" that Ryan had worked. When the boy was old enough to understand, his parents told him about his birth and how Ryan cared for him. "It wasn't only my cone-shaped head that shocked people who saw me shortly after my birth. I didn't even look human. One of our Grove Street neighbors, Myrtle Ash McKay, said I looked like a withered octopus. If it wasn't for Florence Ryan, I probably would be an awful sight to behold today," Babbitt said. The boy who was born with the cone-shaped head recognized early in his life that Ryan vibrated a great deal of healing power. In the years to come, another oddity about the baby's physique would become known. While he had hair on his head and he grew pubic hair, no hair ever grew under his arms or on the rest of his body.

Alma came to accept her second son's abnormalities as an omen that he would be an uncommonly different kind of man. She and her husband named the baby "Elwood" which means "child of the forest." The name was suggested by the newborn's aunt, Una Mae Goodwin, who was a practical nurse. Goodwin was also an instructor in the Rosicrucians, internationally known as the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (A.M.O.R.C.). Principles of healing are among the "Laws of Life" taught by the Rosicrucians. The Babbitts chose Donald for the baby's middle name. Elwood Babbitt never knew if there was any significance to the choice of his middle name. While watching his two sons during their early years of growth and development,

Roy Babbitt readily recognized the differences in their physical traits and spiritual acceptance. Robert grew tall like his grandfather, standing well over six feet. Elwood's slender physique was like that of his father, standing five feet, eight inches. Unlike his father and grandfather, Robert had no interest in developing his spiritual instincts. He followed his mother's admonitions to avoid paranormal experiences. On the other hand, Elwood Babbitt's spiritual energies were so fine, even at the time of his birth, that the spiritual cap of materiality never descended over him. Babbitt said he could see the cap of materiality surrounding other people. The cap was in the form of a cloud-like vapor that enveloped the physical body. If the cap appeared very thick to Babbitt's vision, it meant that the person was totally devoid of spiritual feelings or understanding. If the cap appeared thinner and more transparent, Babbitt recognized that the individual had some sensitivity to spiritual energies. Because Babbitt lacked that cover of materiality, he had serious difficulties throughout his lifetime because he felt everything spiritually rather than materially. He admitted that he did not possess the material judgment that people need to function successfully in their physical lives. Matters such as managing a checkbook and making the normal decisions of everyday life were beyond his ability. Even the necessity of gaining and holding regular employment in order to physically survive was something he could not fully grasp. Throughout most of his life, he saw a greater importance in providing free spiritual "readings" for other people rather than earning money for himself and his family. Because there was no material cap to protect his physical form, Babbitt was exposed to the full force of the spiritual energies. He gave himself to those spiritual forces. Rather than to be guided by the common sense realities of physical life and survival, he listened to the spirits that spoke to him telepathically. While discussing material matters, Babbitt often joked, "I'm no good when it comes to chronology or calendar. I can't remember which year or which day things happened."

Babbitt regularly proved his ineptness at matching the calendar with physical memories. Sometimes, he was ten to twenty years off the mark when he spoke about national and world happenings. But then when he was given the opportunity to sit in a chair and go into a form of light trance, the events of his own life and the names of people he knew more than 70 years prior, flowed from him in astonishing recollection and clarity. These were his spiritual powers at work. "Now, don't ask me in five minutes what I just said," he would quip.

Babbitt could also see and read the auric colors that surrounded other people. This ability posed problems for him in his normal interaction with others. He explained it like this:

As I look at you right now, I see a profusion of colors which form a luminous cloud all around your head. I see your spiritual form rather than your physical form. To see that physical form, I have to look under that cloud. This causes a disruption in my conversations. It helps when I have my eyeglasses on because the frames tend to block out some of that luminescence which is a hindrance to the physical sight. I guess I could compare it to what you might feel when you talk to someone outdoors while facing directly into the sun.

Babbitt enjoyed being with other people who were upbeat and positive. He tried to avoid those with negative attitudes. He did not want to give readings for people who were motivated solely by the quest for monetary rewards. Babbitt said there was no spiritual harm in the honest gain of money if some of it would be used to help others. In a world so full of material selfishness and violence, Babbitt was constantly seeking that special place in which his spiritual teachings could flourish.

Chapter Two

Physical Crises and Spiritual Intervention

While skeptics might accuse Babbitt of exaggeration, he always claimed that Ryan's "miracle" was only one of many practiced upon him over the years. He survived childhood illnesses, boyhood mishaps, and the horrors of service with the U.S. Marines during World War II. Babbitt's conversations were frequently punctuated with the statement that there are no accidents in life. "The laws of attraction and cause and effect are always working. There is a vibratory purpose for everything that happens," he said. In reviewing the early days of his life, Babbitt saw spiritual forces working in tandem with his parents and grandparents, Florence Ryan, Una Mae Goodwin, Dr. Kirk Alexander, and Dr. Ralph Mahar. "I could not have survived my earliest days without the spiritual intervention and the people who were gathered around me," Babbitt declared.

After recounting how Florence Ryan patiently worked on his skull and gently manipulated it into "a more normal shape," Babbitt spoke of another crisis that occurred during his infancy:

Then there was Aunt Una Mae Goodwin and the mellons food. I was probably just a month old and I was losing weight all the time. My parents and everyone else who saw me thought I wasn't going to make it. Dr. Alexander was baffled by it. My parents were worried. Then my aunt Una came in. She had to help my mother. Aunt Una Mae said I needed mellons food. This is an alternative medicine. It's a powdery substance that you mix with water. My aunt knew that this would cure me. Remember that she was very advanced in the order of Rosicrucians and she was deep into spiritual healing methods. My parents and the others around me had faith in her vibratory powers. So they started giving me mellons food through a tube down the esophagus. Aunt Una Mae was right! After a few days, I started to perk up and gain some weight. She saved

my life! Now when we consider how this mellons food cured me, we're looking at the vibratory frequency of a good that is compatible to the energy that was in me. In order for me to be healed, it required the disappearance of whatever was the problem in the healing system. So when Aunt Una Mae brought me mellons food, I received the ingredient matching the problem in my body which was then very frail and small. My parents told me all about my birth and these other things when I was old enough to understand. I have always had love and gratitude for all of them and what they did for me. And we must always remember that it is spirit which does the healing. Aunt Una Mae and others who have vibratory powers are merely the instrument of spirit. Another factor of great importance is faith. We must believe that spirit can heal us in order for it to happen.

Babbitt recalled another incident that took place when he was "five or six years old." While playing with other children at the home of Harold Wheeler on Deacon Street, he made a running leap over an ash heap and came down in some debris which included broken glass. Babbitt said he knew immediately that he had cut his right hand severely. The skin had peeled off the hand like the removal of a glove. The skin was dangling and blood was gushing out. Someone wrapped a piece of cloth around the injured hand and he was brought immediately to the office of Dr. Mahar. While such an injury might not seem so serious today, Babbitt said he might have bled to death if Dr. Mahar had not been available. "Dr. Mahar stopped the bleeding and stitched my hand up. He said I was fortunate not to lose the use of that hand. That's how serious the injury was," said Babbitt. He later underwent skin grafts to repair the damage. Babbitt pointed to small lines on his hand as evidence of the skin grafts he received. Once again, Florence Ryan assisted in treating Babbitt. Dr. Mahar called Ryan "my right hand without whom I could not get along in my work." Dr. Mahar was a solidly-built man who stood only five feet tall. He had

black hair, dark eyes and bushy eyebrows. Elwood Babbitt recalled that Dr. Mahar had "a very professional look" about him. "He was laid back and easy-going. He didn't always follow what he was taught in medical school. He sometimes followed procedures that one might call alternative medicine today. He was very spiritual and he drew a lot from his patients," Babbitt said.

Elwood Babbitt's parents were increasingly concerned about his accident-prone luck. Two years later, misfortune struck again. It was wintertime and he was using a broom to swipe icicles off the edge of the porch roof. He had no chance to protect himself when one icicle broke off freakishly and the tip came directly into the upper lid of his right eye. The lid was nearly ripped off and it was left dangling. Dr. Mahar was summoned and he came immediately. Elwood was placed on the kitchen table where Dr. Mahar put him under sedation. "He sewed the eyelid back on. This type of emergency medicine seems like a miracle for those days. Dr. Mahar said if that icicle had hit my eye just one-eighth of an inch lower, I would have lost the eye completely," said Babbitt. "Dr. Mahar was somewhat amazed when I came out of these accidents without suffering long-term effects. I remember him telling my mother. "That child has some kind of protection around him. I feel it when I touch him," Babbitt said.

"It wasn't just the medical skills and spirituality of Dr. Alexander, Dr. Mahar and Florence Ryan that sustained me but it was also the love of my parents, grandparents and all those who surrounded me," Babbitt added. As an example of that loving concern, he cited another incident:

When I was eleven or twelve, on a very hot day in August, I wanted to go down to the swamp off Beacon Street and pick some cattails. Cattails are tall plants that grow around swamps or marshy places. They are like reeds and they have cylindrical spikes on top of them. We used them like an ornament. It was fun for kids just to blow the fuzz off them like we did with

dandelions. But sometimes we brought them home and put them in a vase. Anyway, my mom didn't want me to go to the swamp that day because I had just recovered from the chicken pox. Well, I teased and teased. Finally my dad said, "Aw, let him go, he'll be all right." So I went down there and picked cattails.

That night, I came down with blisters which puffed up all over my body. You can imagine how those itched and tormented me. My mother had been right in telling me that I wasn't completely over the chicken pox and I should have stayed home. Now I was really sick. Remember that this was the early 1930s when these medical situations were much more serious than they are today. I was in relaps from that attack of chicken pox. My parents consulted with the doctors and it was decided I needed to be bathed in milk. So mom and dad took turns giving me milk baths over several day and the blisters and all that itching gradually went away. During the time that they were caring for me, my parents never berated me. They could have scolded me for my stubbornness in wanting to go to the swamp that day. But all they gave me was loving care. I know that vibrational healing passed through their hands when they administered those milk baths. And of course, I could see my spiritual guides standing by.

Babbitt said he always knew he was under the protection of his spiritual guides and the invisible forces they directed.

The worst accident of Babbitt's youth happened on the night of June 6, 1939 when he was 17 years old. He was driving a Model A Ford roadster when an oncoming vehicle suddenly veered into his line of traffic. Babbitt turned sharply into someone's private driveway to avoid a collision. "I think I displayed good skill for a young driver but unfortunately, the property owner had strung a chain across the driveway to prevent people from invading his privacy. The front end of the car went under the chain which then slammed me across the throat and knocked me

unconscious," Babbitt said. Others who came upon the accident brought him to the office of Dr. Francis Reynolds in Athol who recognized immediately that Babbitt had sustained life-threatening injuries. Babbitt was transported to the hospital in Gardiner where it was determined that he had a fracture of the hyoid bone (Adam's apple), a rupture of the trachea, multiple contusions and lacerations of the face, head and neck. "I began to slowly regain consciousness in the hospital, The doctor told the nurses to do whatever they could to make me more comfortable but he didn't think that I would make it through the next day. I was completely blind and deaf," Babbitt said.

Babbitt said he never had time to begin feeling sorry for himself because it wasn't long after he regained consciousness that he began to feel the presence of a very gentle but powerful spiritual force in the room:

A soft, white light enveloped me entirely and I felt very peaceful. Then a wonderful thing happened! Through my spiritual vision, I saw my grandmother, Ella,, enter the room and walk toward me. My grandmother had died a while before the accident but here she was in full materialization! I saw her just as she had looked in physical form. However, in her materialized form, my grandmother was fully healed of the osteoporosis she suffered in physical life. Her form was fully erect. She came over to the bed and leaned over me. She smiled and said, 'You're going to be all right.' Then she just faded away. I had three nurses around me at the time. Later, they all said they felt a sudden chill during the time that my grandmother's spirit was in the room. Those feelings of chill are phenomena that people feel when spirits are present. They didn't see her but I think they believed me when I said that she had been there.

Babbitt said he remained in the hospital for one week and that he received excellent medical care. "But I have no doubt that the spiritual healing which my grandmother brought to me was

the deciding factor in my recovery from that accident. I actually floated in and out of spirit during those first hours after the accident. I vividly remember the beautiful music, the smell of beautiful flowers and a ball of golden light that went through my whole body. Passing from the physical body and going into spirit is just like walking from one room into another," he said. Babbitt needed several months of convalescence and the loving care of his parents before he recovered. He had problems with his vision and hearing for a considerable time. Babbitt said that while he has always felt confident that spirit and the unseen forces would protect and heal him when needed, enduring physical life has never been easy for him:

I haven't flaunted it. I can be frightened by physical things just like any other man. However, I have always known that spirit would protect me as it did throughout my experiences with the Marines in the Pacific during World War II. I was aware of the psychic shield that surrounded my physical body. It amazed my buddies that I survived firefights in which men fell dead all around me. I was horrified by the mutilated bodies and I was sickened by the stink of death but yet, I was bolstered by a spiritual calm that I felt deep within me. I was able to convey some of this calmness to my buddies. It gave them hope that they could survive the war. They used to volunteer for the patrols that I led because I always brought all my men back. For my own part, my physical body suffered numbing shocks and searing pain but I knew that somehow I would live through the war and come home again. As I was growing up, our nurse, Florence Ryan, used to say that I had an angelic angel assigned to protect me from all harm. I don't want to say that I am something special but I have a special mission.

Chapter Three

Growing Up In Orange

Babbitt painted an idyllic picture of his early upbringing in Orange, Mass., although the Babbitts were a typical working class family with limited financial resources. Orange, which had a population of about 5,000, made good on its town motto which was imprinted on highway signs at the entrances to the community. The signs proclaimed, "The Friendly Town Greet's You." Babbitt remembered there was a great deal of fraternization between neighbors and there were many social events in the community. Babbitt recalled:

They had these big clambakes that brought everyone out. It was wonderful. People had a warm feeling for one another in those days. When you went to a neighbor's house, you were always welcome there. The adults liked to spend their evenings sitting on someone's porch, enjoying conversation about everything that went on in their lives. The children got together on the lawns and sidewalks, playing kick-the-can, hide-and-seek or some other game. When my brother and I were old enough, my parents took us out on hikes and we went to Lake Matawa for swimming. We had a lot of recreational fun in Orange. All of us belonged to the Grange. The kids were brought up knowing they were expected to socialize with other people. It's part of life. We always went to the Grange and all the kids got together. We played cards and various games while the grownups had their meetings and Grange rituals. After the meeting, there was always food and refreshments for everyone. Then the men gathered together to talk about their jobs and about what was happening in Orange and around the world. The women talked about their families and neighborhood activities while they crocheted or knitted.

Babbitt spoke of his parents with pride and affection. He described his father as "a multi-talented person who displayed an intense love and respect for everyone and everything." Babbitt

was first employed at Claude Marden's candy store in Orange. Later, he worked as a machinist at the new Home Sewing Machine Company. After that, Babbitt worked at the L.S. Starrett Company in Athol, starting out on the milling machines. Eventually, he was put in charge of the indicator room where they manufactured chrometers and gauges. Roy Babbitt always practiced his extraordinary sense of humor. He had an endless repertoire of jokes and comical stories and he was always playing pranks on friends and fellow employees. Babbitt was especially popular with the women who worked for him at L.S. Starrett. He was kidded around and playing tricks on them. The women in turn would pay him back with some of their own little pranks. It was all in good fun. However, sometimes people thought Babbitt carried the humor too far. One time, a girl walked out of the plant carrying a pair of panties. She accidentally dropped them on the street. Babbitt picked them up and mailed them to her home in a nicely wrapped box. "That got all over town and everyone was laughing about it. The girl was embarrassed and my mother told him he shouldn't have done that," said Elwood Babbitt. Then there were many remarks about town after Roy Babbitt bought one of Henry Ford's Model T cars. It was a sedan with no sides and it had only a leather canopy for a roof. On the rear of it, Babbitt placed a sign that read "Constipated! Can't pass a thing." Alma Babbitt implored her husband to remove the sign because she didn't like the reproachful remarks uttered at them as they drove along the street. "Aw, they are just a bunch of prudes," Babbitt would say. He finally removed the sign at the request of the town police chief. "Dad had the constitutional right under the provisions of free speech to have that sign on his car but Chief Rogers said it would be a lot more peaceful if he agreed to take it off," declared Elwood Babbitt.

Dad was so funny! He could always see the humorous side of any situation. He could tell one joke after another. He always seemed to be the dominant person wherever he went. He

wasn't a big man. He was only five feet eight inches tall and he was very thin like me. He was very spiritual and other people came to him with their problems. He could tune his mind right into the solution of a problem and he would give them the answer right away. People in the machine shop would come to him with their problems. The big bosses would call in specialists to study these problems but dad could tell them right away what was wrong with those machines. He possessed a special gift. And most people didn't know that he suffered from an ulcer which bothered him constantly. I think he had the ulcer since the time when he was a young man. He always had Alka Seltzer and he carried Tums around with him. He drank a lot of milk. I remember Dr. Mahar would come to the house to talk with my father and they would discuss the ulcer. Dr. Mahar would say, 'There's really no cure for it, Roy. You have to be careful what you eat. Eat garden foods from under the ground.' The doctors in those days didn't know what to do about an ulcer and they couldn't help him much. So dad was limited somewhat in the things that he could do. Of course, he had to be careful what he ate but he knew a lot about taking care of himself. He knew things that just came right out of his own head. He could diagnose many of his own problems as well as those of others. He had always wanted to be a doctor. He should have been a doctor because he had the natural ability. It's too bad he never had the money to go to medical school.

Alma Babbitt did not work outside the home while her boys were still in their early years. "My father was at work from nine to five o'clock but when my brother and I were young, Mom was with us. She was a wonderful mother, a marvelous cook, and a remarkable all-around person. Everyone loved her. We always had a houseful of kids and she would feed them all," Babbitt said. While Roy Babbitt was devoted to his work and he always gave more than the hours necessary to meet his responsibilities, he was totally committed to his family. He devoted

all his free time to his wife and children. Elwood Babbitt said he was always grateful to his parents for the upbringing he and his brother received:

My folks treated everything naturally. They discussed sexual matters with us and taught us that affiliating with a girl is a spiritual attraction. They also taught us that sex is a beautiful thing. They never spoke of it as something dirty that should never be mentioned. If my brother and I ran naked around the house, they didn't get uptight about it. As far as religious teachings go, we were called Universalists but we rarely went to church. Mom always said that our home was our castle and we didn't need anyone telling us how we should live.

When her sons no longer needed her fulltime in the home, Alma Babbitt took a job as head cook in the cafeteria at the Minute Tapioca Company, which was a susidiary of General Foods. Elwood Babbitt remembered that his mother had a special rapport with Howard (Pop) Warren, who was manager of Minute Tapioca. Babbitt recalled:

Mom and Pop Warren had a wonderful relationship. They were very close and they worked so well together. Every year they put on a steam clam and lobster outing. Everybody came to it. My dad used to tease Mom about how close she was to Pop Warren. But of course, nothing romantic ever went on between them. Mom danced with Pop at the American Legion dances. They did a beautiful waltz. My dad was convinced that Mom and Pop Warren were together in a previous lifetime.

Alma Babbitt was active in community affairs. She was president of the American Legion Auxiliary. Among the activities she organized were the veterans dances at Leed's Hospital. "Both my mom and dad went to the hospital to socialize and dance with the veterans. They had a great love and respect for the veterans," Babbitt said.

While Babbitt talked a great deal about his parents and grandparents, he never had any

interest in studying the genealogy of the Babbitt family line. I got a book on genealogy one day but I wasn't interested. My brother was interested but I don't know what happened to the book. The only Babbitts I know about are my father's parents, Rinaldo and Ella. They had the farm in Northfield Plains until they sold it and moved to Orange. My grandfather painted buildings. He mixed his own paints. He said the best time to understand yourself is when everything is quiet. It was quiet when he painted. He said these were good vibrational moments. My grandmother was stone deaf. When I got older I would stay with her while my mother and father went to Leed's Hospital to dance with the veterans. My grandmother would sit in the living room and she would go into deep meditation while crocheting. Without her knowing it, I would crawl under a table that was there. I would watch her crochet for a few moments and then I would throw a pin up into the air and allow it to fall to the floor. She would stop crocheting and cock her head as though she was listening to something. After a while, I understood that she was hearing that pin when it struck the floor. She would not hear a voice but she could hear that pin. In her meditation, the inner frequency of her spiritual ear would pick up the vibrations of that little pin and she could hear it hit the floor. She could hear it because it resounded in her material ear. So you see, these are the basics of vibrational frequency. This experiment with my grandmother always fascinated me.

Babbitt said he never knew his grandparents, the Singers, on his mother's side: They were all from New Orleans. There was quite a tribe of them. My mother had a brother, Eddie, who just disappeared and they never knew what happened to him. When she was a girl, my mom worked in a shop that sold Tepper lingerie merchandise. She had two sisters, Henrietta and Lillian, who each had five children. One of them was a cashier in the big Roosevelt Hotel. Lillian came to Orange to visit my mother one time. I went to New Orleans myself and worked at the Roosevelt

as a bellboy. I also ran the elevator. I went to the Mardi Gras and that was fun. My mother kept in touch with her sisters by letter but I had no affiliations with that side of the family. I didn't know them. They were dyed-in-the-wool Catholics.

While he loved his brother, Robert, and they got along well throughout their growing-up years, they never shared many thoughts on spiritual matters: Robert and I were opposites because he was very much into material things. He respected my gift but he wasn't interested in spiritual matters. It's not that he didn't believe. He was more interested in airplanes and he focused his energies on becoming a pilot. He was brilliant in school. He got top grades and never had to bring a book home from school. That's how smart he was. He was clairvoyant as far as the future of air flight was concerned. He progressed quickly in his career with United Airlines. He was one of their pilots flying out of Denver, Colorado. Like me, he inherited our father's sense of humor. Robert liked to joke that he and his wife always wanted to fly united but they wouldn't let them. He was a good brother to me and I loved and respected him.

At the time of Elwood Babbitt's birth and during his early childhood, his father was working in Claude Marden's candy shop. He had fond memories of those days: Dad was a very good candy maker. At Christmas, we loved to go to the shop for that old-fashioned ribbon candy which was one of my dad's specialities. People would come from many miles around to buy it. When I visited the candy shop, dad would say to me, "Why don't you pull the taffy?" They would put the taffy up on a hook and just keep pulling on it. That's how they made the Christmas ribbons. I was able to help on this even when I was very young. Visiting the candy shop was a great adventure for me.

Claude Marden and his wife were real nice people. I also remember that Mrs. Marden played the piano for the silent movies down at the theater.

Chapter Four

Babbitt was aware of his psychic nature from the time he was very young. "I never had to learn it because I always had it. I had problems between the material and the spiritual when I was only two or three years old. I would see spirit children jump to the top of trees and they would say, 'You can do it too.' Then I would find myself out of body," he said. At school, Babbitt spent a lot of time in the principal's office because he wouldn't do his class work or because of some incident caused by his spiritual awareness. "I always knew what the teachers were going to say before they said it. I would blurt it out and they didn't like that." he said. Another problem was that Babbitt didn't like athletic activities. When he was a freshman in high school, he was suspended from school for two months because of his refusal to participate in physical education. Alma Babbitt went to the school to plead the case for Elwood as well as for her other son, Robert, who also disliked the physical education classes. Eventually, as a result of their mother's interventions they were both exempted from taking physical education. Babbitt explained:

Robert and I just didn't care for sports or those physical education classes. My brother joined the glee club. He really liked music and the songs they sang. Malcolm Hall was the music teacher and he had a band group called Mal's Dance Orchestra. Robert really went in for that.

While he became more disenchanted with school as he progressed through the grades, there were some teachers that Elwood Babbitt liked and admired. He remembered Bessie Edwards, his first grade teacher who was tall and stately in appearance. "She taught me how to read. She made you learn," he said. Babbitt also liked Barbara Crosby, a teacher who was a next-door neighbor to the Babbitts. "She was a good teacher. Boy! You learned with her too." he said. Babbitt remembered two high school teachers, Dutch Moodie who taught biology, and Ralph Snyder who taught English. He wouldn't name the male and female teachers he accidentally discovered in a classroom closet one day. "That wouldn't be nice. I've kept their secret all these years," he

said. Babbitt became very well acquainted with Principal Dwight Davis because he spent so much time in his office. "After a while, Davis decided to make me his errand boy. He said I might as well make myself useful if I was just going to hang around him all the time," Babbitt said. Davis made a few visits to the Babbitt home to confer with Roy and Alma on their son's lack of progress in his studies. While there, Davis would also make efforts to better understand Elwood by engaging him in non-academic conversation. Babbitt remembered: I had guppie fish. I was fascinated by them. I would talk to them. Principal Davis would say, "Elwood, you can't talk to fish." I'd say, "Oh yes, I can." Principal Davis would just shake his head.

Eventually, Roy and Alma Babbitt gave up their efforts to keep their son in school. Elwood Babbitt's formal schooling ended during his sophomore year. However, his brother, Robert, continued and he graduated from high school in 1937. Robert Babbitt went to work at Pratt and Whitney in Hartford, Connecticut. "Robert worked on airplane engines and learned all about them. If I had stayed in school, I would have graduated in 1938. I have no regrets about dropping out. I had no interest in schooling and it wasn't for me," said Elwood Babbitt.

Keep Love In Your Heart

While Elwood Babbitt was never interested in regular classroom academics, he had a lifelong love of music. His interest in music was somewhat of a passion when he was still very young. Among those who encouraged him to pursue his musical instincts was Malcolm Hall, director of music at the local high school:

I grew up listening to Malcolm Hall. He lived over on Prentiss Street. He used to come to the house to talk with my dad. He was another one that had a big interest in spiritualism. He was

very strong in spiritual thought and he used to talk about music too and how it fit in with his spiritual feelings. I used to do readings for him. It wasn't just that he was interested in spirit. He had great concerns over the well-being of his mother, for one thing. And then there was the divorce from his wife and his worries about the future of his children. He wanted to expand himself spiritually and he would ask me why he couldn't see all these things for himself. I told him, "Some day you will." Then one day this light came on right in front of his face while he was driving his car. A voice spoke to him. Of course, he was astonished. He pulled over to the side of the road. He had this vision and it gave him the song, the music, and the words. All of this just poured into him. He grabbed some paper and a pencil to scribble them down before he forgot them. He wrote this song, "Keep Love in Your Heart," and he dedicated it to me because he remembered what I had told him. It's a simple song but it's brilliant. It has a powerful spiritual message. In so many ways, it sums up the message I have tried to bring to others throughout my life. I always knew there was a spiritual unity between Malcolm Hall and me. That's why I had told him that someday he would see and know spirit for himself.

Babbitt always treasured his piano copy of Hall's inspirational song written in the key of G:

Keep love in your heart and a smile on your face,

Sing a song full of joy for each day

Then life is worthwhile, as you travel each mile

With happiness on the way

For it's God's Plan Divine, through the infinite mind,

Our real self we all must find

Sing a song full of joy to mankind.

Babbitt was 12 when he began taking piano lessons from Myrtle Ash McKay who was a neighbor. McKay was an aspiring soprano and when she left Orange to continue her vocal studies, the Babbitts began looking for another piano teacher. Elwood was without a piano teacher for some time. In 1937 when Elwood was 16, Harold Young, an accomplished pianist and all-around musician, moved into town with his wife. Young also had an interest in psychic phenomena and somehow crossed paths with Roy Babbitt. Elwood Babbitt recalled:

Harold Young sure knew music. He was a professional piano player. He could transpose music as he played. He knew all the big-band leaders. The Youngs bought a three-story house on Winter Street. One day, my father happened to tell dad about my piano lessons with Myrtle Ash McKay and that she had left town. Harold told dad, "I hate the piano because my dad forced me to play and study it. When I was a kid I had to practice four hours each day. I also had to learn all the parts of the piano. I could have taken one apart and put it back together." Then Harold went on to say his sister, Dorothy, who was a pianist herself, had moved to Greenfield. He said his sister would teach me piano. Dad asked Harold what kind of piano he should buy for me. Harold replied that an upright piano would be best. My parents saw an advertisement for an upright that was in good shape. They bought it. My dad had also bought a Pontiac sedan from a neighbor. He and mom began driving me to and from Greenfield so I could study piano with Harold Young's sister. Now, that meant a lot to me. Both my mom and dad accompanying me to my piano lessons. Dorothy Young was brilliant. I admired her so much. I could always see a glow of energy exuding from her. She told me in my second lesson, "Elwood, you've got the makings of a pianist but you've got to learn to read the music." My problem was that I played a piece twice

and I had it memorized. She would scold me, telling me that I had to visualize each note that I played when I played it. I was using my spiritual ability to simply memorize the total melody. Then it just flowed out of my spiritual brain and into my fingers. I couldn't tell her what notes I started or ended on.

Babbitt said he never developed the skill to play the piano from a piece of sheet music. He always played it from memory and that amounted to playing by ear which his piano teacher would not accept. Babbitt rationalized that since concert pianists usually played without the sheet music in front of them, he should be able to play from memory. However, Dorothy Young said he would still have to learn to play the composer's strict interpretation of a piece of music. That required practicing directly from the sheet music. "So, here was my spiritual nature getting in the way of my worldly success again but that was all right. I have always enjoyed music of all types and I have always loved to sing along with others," he said. When he was young, Babbitt raised his voice in song on many occasions with Lewis and Virginia Soule:

The Soules had moved to Orange from Everett, Massachusetts. She played piano and the family like to sing. Remember how families used to gather in the parlor or wherever their piano was after the evening meal? Well, the Soules did that and I loved going over to their house to join them. We sang all those beautiful old songs like "Down By The Old Mill Stream." I liked Lewis. He was a short little runt who smoked like a chimney with no damper. He and Virginia were real nice. They also were very broad-minded. They both worked at a company that made boxes. They always welcomed me with open arms and I have the fondest memories of them.

Books From the Wheeler Library

Elwood and Robert Babbitt both loved to read. They would go to the Wheeler Memorial Library where they would check out books. The library was given to the town by Wheeler, the president of the New Home Sewing Machine Company. "He donated this building and thousands of books," Elwood Babbitt said. Elwood loved Zane Grey books:

"I think I read every one of the books in the Zane Grey series. The librarian was Sarah Oberg. Her assistant was Mabel Chasson. They worked so well together. They taught me the Dewey Decimal System so I could find books myself. Sarah Oberg took me under her wing. I learned how to look things up in the files. I could do cross-referencing. After a while I knew just how to locate books that were in different categories on the shelves. I never forgot Sarah Oberg because she gave me a great appreciation of books. She encouraged me to read. There wasn't much variety in my choice of reading materials but I think I read every cowboy story in the library. My brother and I would read in bed half the night. My books were fiction but once in a while, I'd grab a biography about someone I was attracted to, like Thomas Edison. But I never read all the stuff they gave us to read in school. When it came to scientific books or books about the rest of the world, I wasn't interested.

Babbitt Had Few Friends

As a youngster, Elwood Babbitt frequently participated in group activities with other children. He enjoyed the social life of the Grange and he liked the street games. However, he had only a few close friends. Other children rarely warmed up to him.

You see, they knew about my spiritual powers and they were turned off by that. They found me to be an odd, weird creature. It kind of freaked them out. I was never really interested in other

kids. I played with them in games but that was a group connection rather than an individual one. I was always very private. When I wasn't doing something with my family, I didn't mind being alone. I could talk to spirit. I also liked going out for walks by myself.

Despite his contentment with solitude, Babbitt did make an effort to help children who were shunned by others. One of them was a girl who was cross-eyed and had a deformed face. Babbitt pitied her because all the other students shunned her. Her mother, who had been raped when she was a girl, was overly-protective of her. The mother was in a constant state of agitation. She wouldn't let her daughter out of her sight. Babbitt recalled that the girl's father was a tall, thin man who wore a leather jacket all year long. Babbitt said he told the parents not to worry about their daughter when she was at school. "I told them I would watch over her and I did. Over the years, I have wondered what became of that girl. I lost track of her," Babbitt said

While saying he didn't have many close friends during his early years, he never forgot Earl Hanson. At the age of 79, Babbitt still had vivid memories of Hanson. He became very emotional as he described how he witnessed his young friend's death: I was ten or twelve years old and Earl Hanson lived across from our place on Mechanic Street. He was a very anemic boy who lived on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches because that's all he could hold in his stomach. He would eat three, four or five of those sandwiches each day. That's all he could eat. Because of his health and the limits it placed on him, Earl was a very private person. He didn't have many friends either because he was mild-mannered and couldn't take part in rough and tumble fun. But he and I were very close friends. Like me, he loved nature and we used to have some long talks. He told me one day, "I have a picture in my mind that I haven't much longer to live. I wanted you to know and not feel badly. But I know it won't be far off." Two days later, Earl was pumping his

bike up Mechanic Street. He got right in front of my house when I happened to be outdoors. I waved to him and he waved back. All of a sudden, the bike left the sidewalk and Earl fell into the cutter. I ran over to him and I saw him dying of a massive heart attack. I called for help but nothing could be done for him. He was gone. Losing him broke my heart. Earl Hanson was a beautiful person.

Babbitt's eyes welled with tears and his voice choked up as he remembered Hanson. He needed time to regain his composure. "I hadn't thought of him for some time but just now as we were talking about those early years in Orange, I suddenly got a view of Earl in spirit and these memories of him flooded through me," Babbitt said.

People of Orange

Babbitt recalled Tom Redway, a machinist who had performed as a circus clown. Redway would entertain kids on the street. He could juggle all kinds of things: Tom and dad would have some nice talks. Tom would perform at the American Legion after the club members had their regular meetings. It surprised a lot of people when they learned that Tom was actually quite shy about performing. He hid behind his make-up when he played the role of a clown. But when he performed for grownups at the American Legion, he sometimes needed the encouragement of a drink or two before he performed. One of his special acts was a recitation of 'The Face on the Barroom Floor.' It's a famous poem. There wasn't a dry eye in the place every time he did it. I remember one day on the street when a little girl decided to put her Sunday School lessons into practice. She approached Tom who was quite unsteady on his feet because he had been drinking. "Have you found Jesus?," the little girl asked Tom. Weaving about and casting a glance at Police

Chief Rogers who was standing close by, Tom replied, "I didn't know he was lost." Chief Rogers got a wham out of that and you could hear him laughing all up and down the street. Tom was very clairvoyant and had powers of levitation. He could give wonderful lectures about spirit. Tom was rather scared of his powers because he didn't know how he did it. He lived alone in a cabin over at Lake Matawa. One day they found old Tom dead in his cabin. There were rats around the body. We were all very sad that he died. It was also tragic that he died alone in those circumstances.

Babbitt liked to tell the story about the Dead End sign that was posted at the entrance to the road leading into the cemetery. The Rev. Lovejoy, pastor of the Universalist Church, felt that the sign was disrespectful to those who were buried there. He convinced town officials to remove the sign. "My father thought that was really petty of the reverend. He wondered what else they could call that strip of road," Elwood Babbitt said.

Roy Babbitt liked to tease people he thought were too pious in their religious pronouncements. Elwood Babbitt related an example I recall this man named Talbot who frequently walked about with a Bible tucked under his arm. He walked by the house one Sunday when we were mixing cement for a little project my dad was anxious to get done. Talbot stopped and said, "You know, Roy, it's a sin to work on Sunday." My dad looked at him with a smirk and replied, "You know what they say, the better the day, the better the deed."

Elwood Babbitt said his father had a close friend named George Sanger who had considerable spiritual energy. The two men frequently talked about about spirit and how they should remain in contact with one another after one of them died: Well, George died first and opened up this direct voice channel with my dad. George would talk to dad. One day, a couple ministers were at our house, trying again to dissuade dad from these spiritualistic activities he

was into. They used to say that contact with the dead was the work of the devil. My dad was always polite and allowed the ministers to speak. On this particular day, they were working real hard to get dad away from all this. They were really preaching! Then suddenly, George Sanger's voice rang out, "Hello Roy! That's a bunch of crap!" Well, those ministers were so shocked that they hopped right up out of their chairs and ran out the screen door.

Among the characters Elwood Babbitt found interesting and fun to be around was Leroy Lizzotte, custodian at the town hall: He was a former millwright for the old steam sawmill. He started a lawn mower business and I'd go down to help him. He was an ace pool player. We'd play pool at the Knights of Pythias hall. Lizzotte would take a challenge from anyone. He was an outstanding pool player because he was driven by some type of spiritual force. When I'd ask him how come he was so good, he would say 'I don't know what it is but the minute I start to play, I feel somebody take over.

Babbitt recalled the telephone system of his growing up years. "Our first phone number was 63J. We had to ring the operator and she would plug in our number. My mom was always so thrilled when she was able call one of her sisters in New Orleans," said Babbitt. According to Babbitt, Orange's nighttime operator was a very talkative person and she liked to gossip with her. " She and her husband lived in Athol where he was employed. She'd ride over to Orange five miles every night. She had a sense of humor. One time she told me how her daughter got pregnant because she forgot to reverse the charges," said Babbitt. Roy Babbitt was a friend of Chief Justice Walker who lived on North Main Street. "He was a good friend of dad's and he also had a sense of humor. He would joke that the laws are made for the people but you can do anything you want if you can get away with it. He was wonderful. Everybody loved him," Babbitt said.

Although he possessed spiritual powers himself, Babbitt always appreciated psychic feats performed by others. He recalled that he was still quite young when he began sneaking into an old barn that had been converted into a rustic drinking place where men regularly gathered: There actually was a bar in that old barn and the men loved to meet there. They drank and told one another stories they would never tell in front of their wives. At times, some stood up and put on an act. They might sing or tell a dirty joke. I liked to watch and listen to them, especially when this old man from Wendell Depot was there. He would gulp down a shot of liquor and then chase it down with big swallows of beer. I guess they call that combination a boilemaker. Well, this old man was amazing and when he stood up everybody paid close attention. He would grab a broom and stand it up in the middle of the floor. Then he would back away while waving his arms and that broom would begin to dance all over the floor. No one was touching the broom and there were no wires or strings attached to it. That broom was dancing all by itself. It was incredible! I always wanted to know how he did it. He would never tell anyone his secret. All we knew is that he couldn't do it until after he had taken a few of those boilemakers.

As a youth, Babbitt was impressed by the powers of Medium John Bunker who staged public performances. "Bunker had outdoor meetings and he invited me to work with him," Babbitt said. Bunker would hang a white sheet across a wire and ask if anyone wanted to loan him their watch or some piece of jewelry so he could give a demonstration. Bunker would take the item and place it up against the bottom of the sheet. He would remove his hand from the item and it would slowly rise up the side of the sheet. Without Bunker touching the item in any way, it would then come back down at the same slow speed in clear view of all the spectators. "After seeing some jewelry go up and down the sheet, an elderly gentleman wanted more proof of John's powers by seeing a heavier item. So John did the feat with the man's vest pocket watch

which was a lot heavier. That convinced the man," said Babbitt.

One story that Babbitt knew was a fabrication was the tale of how Miller's River got its name. Yet, he never tired of the story and never remembered that he had told his listener the same story before. He roared mirthfully every time he finished telling it. Again, he attributed the yarn to his father. His version went like this: We all knew the train crossed the river on a trestle but one time, there was a rider on the train who didn't know that. When the train stopped for some unexplained reason this guy who had been drinking thought he would step out and get some air while the engineers figured out the problem. He got some air all right. He stepped right off the train and the trestle. He plunged to the river below and drowned. His name was Miller. So from that day forward, they called it Miller's River.

Babbitt said he never considered it spiritually right to use his psychic ability for self-enrichment. However, he felt it proper to assist others as long as they were not out to harm or take advantage of others. Among those who benefitted from Babbitt's clairvoyance was Kiddo DeGara: Kiddo played the horses and sometimes he would ask me what his chances were on a particular day. If I couldn't see him picking a winner that day, I would joke, "They're running backwards today. Don't play it!" But if I saw a good chance for him, I'd let him know. Kiddo made a lot of money on the races. Kiddo was a lovable short guy. He reminded me of Mickey Rooney. He had an inferiority complex because of his small size but that didn't slow him down in his socializing. That helped him in his job as a bus driver. He liked to mingle with the girls. They loved him. Everybody was shocked one morning when word got around that they found Kiddo dead in bed. I wasn't home then. My mom wrote and told me about it. They had a big funeral. I felt sorry I missed it.

Babbitt had fond memories of all the sites in the business district, including the Orange Grille which was across the road from Martin's candy store; the clothing store owned by Dexter and Henry Wood at the corner of East Main and South Street; Jackson's Drug Store which would open at any time so doctors could fill prescriptions; Lockeby Service Station; and the Grout Brothers garage.

Hard Times During the Depression

Times were hard for the Babbitt family during the years of the Great Depression. Along with many others, Roy Babbitt lost his job in the early 1930s when the Sewer Sewing Machine Company declared bankruptcy and went out of business. Elwood Babbitt remembered his family was lucky ones because Roy Babbitt was able to find a parttime job, working three days per week as a maintenance assistant at the elementary school: I remember one of the projects he worked on involved the installation of toilets. That came under President Franklin Roosevelt's CCC program. Times were tough. Dad didn't make much money but we managed to get by, thanks to my mother's resourcefulness. We had a big garden. All the neighbors were very supportive of one another. We all shared. We wore patched clothing. You might say we were living out of the Salvation Army. And as far as meals were concerned, it was necessity stew a lot of the time. That's where mom came in because she could make the most of anything and make it taste good. I remember too that during the summer months my brother and I spent a lot of time in the big cemetery where we would pick up pine cones. We'd bring them back home in bags. My parents used to burn them in the kitchen stove to save on wood fuel. Although those were hard days, they also were wonderful days. There was a lot of love, concern and socializing with

friends and neighbors. It seems that everybody was your friend. As my dad would say, 'You accept people for what they are and never mind what they're doing under the quilt,' meaning that their private lives were their own and we had no business prying into their affairs. Dad would say the wisest things in very short sentences. He was a beautiful man. There was never a time when we couldn't go to him with our problems. He was always with us unless he was at work. He would do whatever we wanted to do, even if it was something he didn't particularly like. Of course, he enjoyed the circus and things like that, just as much as we did. He would take us to the circus at Athol. We'd travel on the trolley car. Mom would put up a lunch for us. He would also take us to all kinds of shows and musical concerts. We sure loved all that.

According to Elwood Babbitt, his father's intuitive powers came to the fore during these difficult times. Roy Babbitt experienced one of those moments of special inspiration as he pondered employment possibilities. Acting upon an inner feeling, he went to the L.S. Starrett Company in Athol where he managed to strike up a conversation with one of the Starrett brothers. "They talked about this and that and then dad ended up with a milling job at Starrett. That raised our standard of living a bit. We rose up out of all that poverty. That was in nineteen thirty- three or thirty-four," Babbitt said. After a while, Roy Babbitt was promoted to a supervisory job in the indicator room where they made measurement gauges. The company thought highly of Babbitt and he was grateful for the opportunity to work there. However, Elwood Babbitt always harbored some bitterness because the company denied his father the monetary rewards of a device he invented. "He invented a certain kind of pliers and he would have made a lot of money on it but they took it from him. They claimed he made it on company time," Babbitt said.

While Elwood Babbitt was aware of his spiritual abilities and was giving readings when he

was still very young, he wasn't thinking then about devoting his life to mediumship. He was about 10 years old when his father took him to Lake Pleasant in Miller's Falls, about twenty miles from Orange, where a spiritualist camp had been established. People would travel from many miles to come to the spiritual gatherings at Lake Pleasant, Babbitt said. According to Babbitt, in those days, more people were open to spirit and many of them had abilities but let others know it. because the churches frowned on it. "They came on trains from the cities. Some well-known psychics would appear at Lake Pleasant. On the day that I went for the first time, Theodore (Ted) Russell, a famous British medium, was demonstrating his powers. You'd write a message and seal it. Ted would pick up the envelope, place it on his forehead and announce what was coming in," Babbitt said. "I wrote my grandmother's name on my sheet of paper. When Ted picked it up, he looked down at me and said, 'Someday, you'll be a famous medium.' Babbitt became an understudy to Russell on that day. He was still a teenager when he first went to Buffalo, New York, to work with Russell. In later years, Babbitt would join Russell in Buffalo again when they performed before much larger audiences. Babbitt said Russell was also an accomplished stage actor so his spiritual readings were done with a dramatic flair. "He was tall and slender. A very handsome man with dark flashing eyes. He was the epitome of what one would consider the ultimate actor to be. The aura that he created around himself was that of the consummate British actor. said Babbitt. Ted always called me Skippy because he said my mind was always running and he had never met anyone else who could give out information as fast as I did." said Babbitt.

End of Babbitt's Early Years

