

[Page 39 - How we Buried Our Dead](#)ISSUE : [Issue 18](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1977/12/1

glad to see me, so the first one that was looked after was me. Give me a hot cup of tea and take off the icicles. Clothes changed. Casket was brought in and put flat on the floor in the living room. Everything opened up on it so you could get it dry • it was soaking, wringing wet. Okay. Big roar? ing fire going on. Everybody was looking at it. The casket was well-examined. No corpse in it. Well, what are we going to do next? Well, you can't get the casket upstairs. We'll have to get him down. Well the strongest man there • he'd be the only one who could pick him out of bed and get him down. Who's going to help him? Well, damn it all, I'll help him. But the. strong man was so big that no matter what he did with the corpse there was no way that he could get down the stairs. It was then agreed that if they'd put Charlie on my shoulders • and the corpse by now was stiff as a pole and wouldn't oend. Too long laying in bed. I couldn't Lift him out. So they planked him on my shoulder and got out in a kind of a hall md tried to swing him out • head sticking 5ut here, feet sticking out there. Look, I said, never mind the natural way. Let's :arry him belly down and I'll get my hands in between his armpits and you balance the 'eet • up or down • we all agreed. Okay, started. Down. But I couldn't hold him on ny shoulder. I got my head right down so the body could go right over my head then reached up and got the hands in the shoul? der pits. The stairs were too narrow. Couldn't get him on my shoulder and couldn't hold him on my shoulder, so I got him on the back of my head. And the steps. Come one. First step things is all right. Pumped up. Two. All right up there? I said, you keep holding him back. Come to the clearing in the stairs. Wooooo. The body croaks over. And the roar. Holy jumping Moses, I often think of it. If I was a nervous guy I would have been dead under the body. The head was stuck out ahead of me • it coped down. The pumps of the step pumped the wind out of the stomach. See. And whooooo • the body collapsed into a big hinge. And here I was stuck in the turn of the stairs. The body was over my head. Couldn't get it up. It was heavy. They couldn't get it up. We were practically knocked out with the roar of the body and the wind and everything. Anyhow, after I got my wind • another fellow, George, he's dead now, was waiting for us down at the bottom of the stairs. George called, are you all right? Yes, I said. And yes from up top • but the fellow said I don't know how we're going to get it down. I couldn't even see the steps by this time. The body had me jammed in front. The legs were be? hind me and the arms in front of me • and the fellow above still holding back so I wouldn't fall on my face. So down the next step. And the next. And finally down. And that's how we got the corpse down the nar? row stairs. And then get to the was willing then to like I was going to Pretty near two days out of my neck • that head. Narrow stairs ing. Gee whiz, boy, And then he hollered thumps on the first loosened up. casket. And everyone give a hand. It looked have a broken neck, to get the stiffness body hanging on my and boarded in. No rail- an awful experience. wheoooooooo. The couple steps I made had Anyhow, they flattened him out on the floor then and everybody took and put him in the casket. Put him up on two kitchen chairs. And the wake is on. Then everybody gets religious and start praying. And



what they would do in those days • everybody would gather round and say the rosary • that's the beads. From then on it was tee-total res? pect. The priest got there. Then up to the grave. . 'ss- / NEWS ' the Besf'' CBIT TELEVISION Channels 2,5'73,10,12, and 13inCape Breton HAS IT ALL CBC " CBI RADIO 1140 on your Dial in Cape Breton Cape Breton's Magazine/39