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William G. Dooley, North Sydney: I was born in 1881, 12th of September. I started in as a funeral director in 1897. One time there were no funeral directors at all. My father started the first one. He was one of those fellows, everyone was a neighbour like. And a person would die they'd call him • and he'd wash them and dress them and make the casket by hand. He was in the carpenter business, picture framing. He went on till he became an immigration officer • then I took over. I didn't make coffins. By that time you could get them. There was a firm started in Amherst • I think in 1892 • and later on a firm started in Antigonish. Mrs. Dooley: You be sure and tell him those were the hard days. Half past 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning, the hospital would call. Mrs. So-and-so died • come down for the body right away. Today you can wait till the morning. Mr. Dooley: And it would be all excitement. Death in the family wasn't very often. And they'd feel you must get them fixed up right away. In those days, you see, we'd take our grip and equipment and do all the work at the house and even at the hospital after the hospital started here. What we had then, you wouldn't call it a funeral parlour. In a way, it was the only thing • if, for instance, a sailor died • on a ship. Well, we'd take him home and fix him up. But the bodies were normally at their own homes. People wouldn't listen to funeral home then anyway. (You learned by just being around your father?) Yes. And when we'd get a chance we'd practise. Get an idea and if it turned out all right, well, that would be all right. Get an idea we could make that fel? low look a whole lot nicer than he's look? ing now. Little touch here and there, you know. Then the embalming fluid got on the market. They didn't have that at first at all. Used to get it from the Egyptian Chem? ical Company, about the only ones who made it in Canada. How we learned • say we'd buy a case of fluid, there'd be a circular come with a case of fluid and you'd try it out first chance you got. And some of those sailors, as I said before, we could do a little practising on them. Because there'd be no? body to say he don't look like himself. We'd try methods, take notes • and if we'd get a chance we'd hold them over for a week or two, see how they'd take it. There wasn't a school then. But there was a firm in Saint John, N. B., that built a factory to make caskets and sell fluid. And to make a start they got Dr. Renouard. He was a famous fellow in the States there. He'd come down and give them IO-day lectures. But this firm didn't last too long. But this Dr. Renouard, his father was a doctor in the Civil War and he was looking after the people who were killed and fixed up and sent to their original home for burial. And the way it was, before the train would take the body they'd have to be sure there was no smell • so he was his own boss, ship when he was ready • that's really the start of it. He made his own fluid. (At first, did people object to embalming fluid?) Well, they want the body looking as natural and no swelling or anything like that. They don't care how you do it but do it. Mrs. Dooley! In those days, dear, there was diptheria. And there was a place way down here in North Sydney by the station where they kept them. If someone died of dipther? ia then. Will would have to go. Mr. Dooley: Yes, and tuberculosis, and smallpox, and just one case of leprosy. (Were you frightened?) No, somehow or other, Known for Quality



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