

Pat Malone Forgot That He Was Dead

As sung by
Robert Walker
Crandon, WI



Verse 1.

Times was hard in Irish town, everything was going down,
Pat Malone was pushed for ready cash.
He'd for life insurance spend, all his money to extend,
And his wife spoke up and said, "Now, dear Pat, if you were dead,
There's twenty thousand dollars we could take."
And so Pat lay down and tried to make out that he had died,
Until he smelt the whiskey at the wake.
And Pat Malone forgot that he was dead,
He raised himself from the bed, 'n while he said,
"If this wake goes on a minute, to be sure, the corpse, he must be in it,
For you'll have to get me drunk to keep me dead."

Verse 2.

So they gave the corpse a shuffle, 'n afterwards they filled him up,
And laid him down again upon the bed.
And before the morning gray, everybody felt so gay,
They forgot that Pat was only playing off dead.
So they raised him from the bunk, still alive but awful drunk,
And put him in the coffin with a prayer.
And the driver of the cart, said "Begad, I'll never start,
Until I see that someone pays the fare."
And Pat Malone forgot that he was dead,
He raised himself from the coffin while he said,
"If you fairly doubt my credit, you'll be sorry that you said it,
Drive on or else the corpse will break your head."

Verse 3.

So the funeral started out on the cemetery route,
And the neighbors tried to the widow to console,
Till they got beside the base of Malone's last resting place,
And gently lowered Patrick in the hole.
Then Pat began to see, just as plain as one can see,
That he forgot to reckon on the end.
And as clods began to drop, he broke loose the coffin top,
And quickly to the earth he did ascend.
And Pat Malone forgot that he was dead,
And from the cemetery quickly fled.
He came nearly going under, it's a lucky thing by thunder,
That Pat Malone forgot that he was dead.

Transcription and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by Peters, p. 300, and HST.

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Sung by Robert Walker, age 58, Crandon, 1941.

Mr. Walker used to sing this song in the lumbercamps in northeastern Wisconsin.

Editor's notes:

Randolph lists "Finnigan's Wake" as a related song, but in Stratman-Thomas's collection the two are distinct in both text and melody.

Alternate title/related songs: "Irish Wake."

Sources:

Lynn, Frank. *Songs for Swingin' Housemothers*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1961. Different tune

Peters, Harry B., ed. *Folk Songs out of Wisconsin: An Illustrated Compendium of Words and Music*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977.

Randolph, Vance, collector and editor. *Ozark Folksongs*. Vol. III. Columbia, Mo.: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1946-50. "Irish Wake," different tune

K.G.