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George Rambeau Tells a Forerunner One day in January, 1987, we were talking with George Rambeau, Smelt Brook, about the obituary poet, Andrew Dunphy. (See "Search? ing for Cape Breton Folk Songs," Issue 41, and "An Elegy by Andrew Dunphy" in Issue 44, of CAPE BRETON'S MAGAZINE.) One thing led to another, and we asked Mr. Rambeau: (Did Andrew believe in forerunners?) I be? lieve he did. Believe in forerunners. (Did he ever tell you of any?) Yes. But. Do you believe in them? (I believe people have real experiences, although I've never known of something before it happened. I've had a couple of odd things since I came to Cape Breton. I once saw a person that shouldn't have been just where they were. Just once. Some people seem to real? ly have a lot of that.) Well, there's some people, yes, according to what they tell you, nothing for them to see forerunners. (What did Andrew Dunphy see?) I think he saw his father. But Andrew was a fellow was pretty careful of telling you anything like that. And--but he claimed if you ever saw anything like that, there was something be? tween you and that--what you saw--that left you uncertain. There was a barrier, that you couldn't be sure. You might feel sure, but there was something else that.... He could have been sure, if ,he hadn't of been baffled off. But there was something, like, took his attention and.... (What did he think his father wanted?) He didn't know. He didn't know. (Did he ever see, or feel, or even hear anything, be? fore someone was going to die?) Well, now, he never told much. (You know, I've met some men who used to make coffins in communities. And one man told me that his tools would glow a short while before he was going to use them. And he'd know there was going to be a need for that. Or he'd hear a knock, sometimes, at his door. And maybe three weeks later someone would knock at just that time to let him know he was needed, to go to work and make a coffin. And I wondered, with Andrew being so close to families, and performing a function, you know, like a carpenter--writing obituary poetry.) No, that's the only thing he ever told me, that. (Saw his father.) (Did you ever see anything like that?) Well, I saw something once. But I was like Andrew. I couldn't know and I didn't know. An old gentleman down here--Briand--died. And he was a nice old fellow, and we all liked him, you know. So there was me and me brother--we were two young fellows--and a first cousin of ours. We were down to the wake. He was wakin' home in his own house. It was just about sundown--nice fine evening. And when we got down to where he was liv? ing, we saw three women coming from the way of the house, coming towards us. There was a fence at that time along the road. And they were on the inside of the fence, on the field side. But they were coming right along the fence, pretty close to us. We didn't know who they were. They looked like strangers to us. We never saw--we knew every woman 'round from White Point to South Harbour, but we knew we never saw them before. Or we didn't think we did. But when they were getting up pretty close, there was one of them looked to me like Paddy Dunphy's wife--the one we were talking about there? Helen Jane Curtis's mother? And I knew her as well as I knew meself. I had it in mind to speak to her when she came abreast, you know? Just before they came



abreast of us, they turned, away from us. And they walked away from us, and there was a path going from the house down to the shore. They walked over

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