

Tribute to a 'Silver Star'

New generation steel orchestra salutes founder

TA 961206 P. 44

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AT THE second of the Parang and Steel concerts, hosted by Silver Stars Steel Orchestra, last Saturday night, the band took the opportunity to pay tribute to its founder, Edgar "Junior" Pouchet, who was home on a short visit.

A large gathering of friends and supporters of the band at the pan theatre on Tragarete Road in Newtown, heard from



EDGAR "JUNIOR" POUCHET

...pioneering spirit.

his sister how the saga of Silver Stars began in 1950 when Junior, who was in his early teens, received a tenor pan from his parents as a birthday gift.

He encouraged his brother, Everard and some friends to form a steelband which they called Gold Coast. Being students of St Mary's College, they were threatened with expulsion from the institution since involvement with the steelband at that time was associated with "vagabond acts."

The Pouchet brothers, nevertheless, continued their pan playing at Carnival time with a Newtown band called Valentinós. During a practice session one night, the police arrested seven members and charged them for disturbing the peace. The matter went before the courts, but the magistrate ruled that "steelband music was not a nuisance before 10 pm," and awarded each member \$250 for wrongful arrest.

In 1952, the name of the band was changed to Silver Stars and in 1954 Junior was elected leader of the band, a position he held for 20 years before going to live abroad.

Junior made Silver Stars the most popular

dance steelband of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as one of the most recorded steelbands in the history of pan with his arrangements of selections such as Miss Ruby, Theme From Dr Zhivago and Salut D'amor which remained on the top ten charts for six weeks. Waltzing Mathilda, Elizabethan Serenade, Ghost Riders In The Sky and Gaudeamus Igitur were some of the other popular songs he arranged.

Under his leadership Silver Stars became the only steelband to win the Band of the Year title. This occurred with the portrayal, "Gulliver's Travels" in 1963. In 1964 and 1965, Silver Stars went on to place second and fifth, respectively, in that competition.

In 1959 the band placed first in the west competition for the Renison Trophy (music festival). The following year, 1960, Silver Stars became a finalist in the first Music Festival, playing Verceuse from Joycelyn, making it the first known steelband to attempt a classical composition.

In 1962, the band was again a finalist in the Music Festival and in 1963 won first place in the Independence Festival. In 1968, Silver Stars placed first in the North Panorama competition and was third in the National Panorama championships of 1970.

Some of Junior's achievements include: president of the Steelbands Association in 1960; national Panorama judge in 1988, 1990 and 1991; co-manager of a national steelband that toured 13 of the United States in 1964; composer of several pieces including a musical score titled Rehabilitation; and the first to compose his own music for the Music Festival with In A Creole Melody for Silver Stars in 1966.

Junior was cultural ambassador for TT in Bermuda in the 1960s and since 1971 has been on contract to Walt Disney World in Florida, where he manages and plays in the resident steelband there known as JP and the Silver Stars.

The panman with the longest overseas enter-

tainment contract in history, Junior holds the position of director of music with Disney World.

He comes home every year for Carnival, and arranges selections from time to time for Silver Stars. This year he composed a song titled A

Tribute To Neville Jules, which the band played for the Bomb Competition named after the panman.

"The new generation Silver Stars salutes you, Junior, and recognises that without your contribution to the formation and development of

the band, the esteem and recognition which it now enjoys may not have been realised and, in the same way, without your pioneering spirit and creative genius, the artform that is now pan music may have taken a little longer to take the turn that it did," his sister

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