



Doris Mannette

PAPPY MANNETTE: THE FATHER of Vernon and Ellie Mannette, 105-year-old "Pappy" Mannette, is escorted at his son's funeral by relatives and friends. **Photo by NOEL SALDENHA**

Pan elite turn out to bury 'Birdie'

THE PACKED St Mary's RC Church and churchyard assumed the appearance of a who's who gathering of the national steelband fraternity yesterday morning.

Pannists, politicians and musicians from across the country congregated at the St James church to pay last respects to legendary Invaders pan figure Vernon "Birdie" Mannette who passed away last Saturday night.

Among the many mourners were Finance Minister Brian Kuei Tung, Roman Catholic Archbishop Anthony Pantin, trade unionist Lyle Townsend, Pan Trinbago president Patrick Arnold, former Invaders captain Errol Garcia, flagman Mervyn Gulston, Maurice "Black Head" Bernard, Arnim Smith, Bobby Mohammed, Charles Darway, Pelham Goddard, Curtis Pierre, Sterling Betancourt, Patsy Ross, Norton Ince, Rudy Piggott, Lennox Kilgour and Len "Boogsie" Sharpe who flew into the country on Tuesday night, from the United States, to attend the funeral.

The funeral also was attended by students of Woodbrook Government Secondary School and Trinity College, whose Woodtrin instruments were tuned by Mannette. A few surviving members of Alexander Ragtime Band, the band out of which Invaders evolved during the '40s, were also in attendance, as were members of the Invaders' Elders organisation.

Notably absent at the funeral was Ellie Mannette, Vernon's elder brother. Invaders official Jim Inniss explained Ellie had already made plans to come to Trinidad next year with his students from North Virginia University, and was unable to make two trips.

Speaking about Vernon, Inniss said: "The most remarkable thing about Birdie was that distinctive sound he succeeded in giving Invaders all through the years. It as sound that was unique and easily recognisable as belonging exclusively to one steelband, Invaders."

Following the church service, conducted by Fr F Murray, and a street procession at which PSC Starlift and Scorpion Pan Reflections performed, Mannette was cremated at the Cinerary on Long Circular Road. Woodbrook Playboyz performed at the crematorium, while BWIA Invaders performed at the church.

Mannette leaves to mourn his wife, Lorna; three children, Simone, Barry and Marlon; and grand-daughter Chelsea. (PRB)