

Plaque for 'Spree'

A BRONZE plaque commemorating Winston "Spree" Simon's contribution to the steelband movement will be unveiled today in Spree Simon Square in East Port of Spain. The opening lines of Kitchener's *Tribute to Spree*

(which Rocky Mc Collin researched) have been emblazoned on the plaque.

The idea for the plaque and dedication of the square is credited to Robert Chee Mooke, former deputy Mayor of Port of Spain.

He proposed the plan when he was chairman of the General Purposes Committee of the City Council and will deliver the feature address at today's ceremony. "Spree" Simon's nephew and niece, Wilfred and Stephanie Simon, have been invited to the unveiling.

The square which sits between Besson Street Square and Columbus Square was created when Old St Joseph Road was widened. Chee Mooke said, "The City Engineer, Hatim Hassan, gave us that square. It was vacant and I came up with the idea to name it after Spree."

Chee Mooke further suggested the Pat Chu Foon sculpture, dedicated to all panmen, be located in the square. The sculpture had been commissioned by the late Fitz Blackman when he was Mayor of the city. Chu Foon recalled, "It was executed for the 10th anniversary of Independence as a monument to the steelband movement."

The sculpture which stood on Wrightson Road was vandalised by vagrants and with the help of the Lions Club was repaired and removed to Spree Simon Square "in the rain, on a truck from Seereeram Bros, thanks to engineer, Dr Webb," Chee Mooke said.

Reynold Sarjeant, architect and brother of former Mayor Steve, designed the podium and Workers Bank covered the cost of the lights which ran up to \$2,300.

Another historic unveiling will take place soon in the area during the visit of the Ooni of Ife, head of the Yorubas. It is hoped that the dignitary will unveil a sign, mounted in Besson Street square, that will identify that part of East Port of Spain which was known as Yarraba Town or Yarraba Village during the last century.

The area was so called because of the large population of Yarraba or Yoruba-speaking people living there. They were free Africans from the West Coast of Africa who were taken as slaves but liberated by the British navy. They were brought to Trinidad and formed societies for their own protection and kept the Orisa faith flourishing.

That sign is part of a plan moved by John Stecher to let the streets of Old Port of Spain bear the original French and Spanish as well as English names by which they are now known.