

Praise song for Neville

By SEAN DOUGLAS

NEVILLE JULES was one of the very first persons to actually play out a tune on a crudely fashioned steelpan way back in the 1940s.

On Tuesday night top members of the pan fraternity paid tribute to him at a celebration of his 75th birthday at the Neal and Massy Trinidad All Stars panyard at the corner of Duke and Picadilly Streets, Port of Spain.

Minister in the Ministry of Culture Eddie Hart, who is a player in the band, gave the feature address.

Declaring that the society had too long failed to accord Jules recognition as the foremost icon of the steelpan pioneering movement, Hart declared: "He's the greatest unsung hero of the steelband movement."

Hart recounted that Jules had helped invent pan by knocking biscuit tins into crude prototypes of what was to eventually become the steelpan of today. "He took the 'pingpong' from four

notes to eight notes to 16 notes. He made cuff-booms and bass-booms. All the time trying to develop the sound of a modern orchestra."

Hart acknowledged that rival pan pioneer Ellie Mannette was then the best fashioner of notes, but said Jules excelled in orchestration. Hart said: "Cap, your place in history is undiminished. After this night may you be declared the undisputed father of the steel-drum orchestra."

Disclosing that All Stars was one of the few organisations older than even his own political party, the PNM, Hart said: "I believe we owe that longevity to Neville Jules despite him relinquishing the captaincy of this steelband over 30 years ago."

Hart who has been with All Stars since 1959 to the present, recalled the early days under Jules leadership. "Discipline and rigour were synonymous with the name Neville Jules. He fashioned All Stars into a musical war machine.

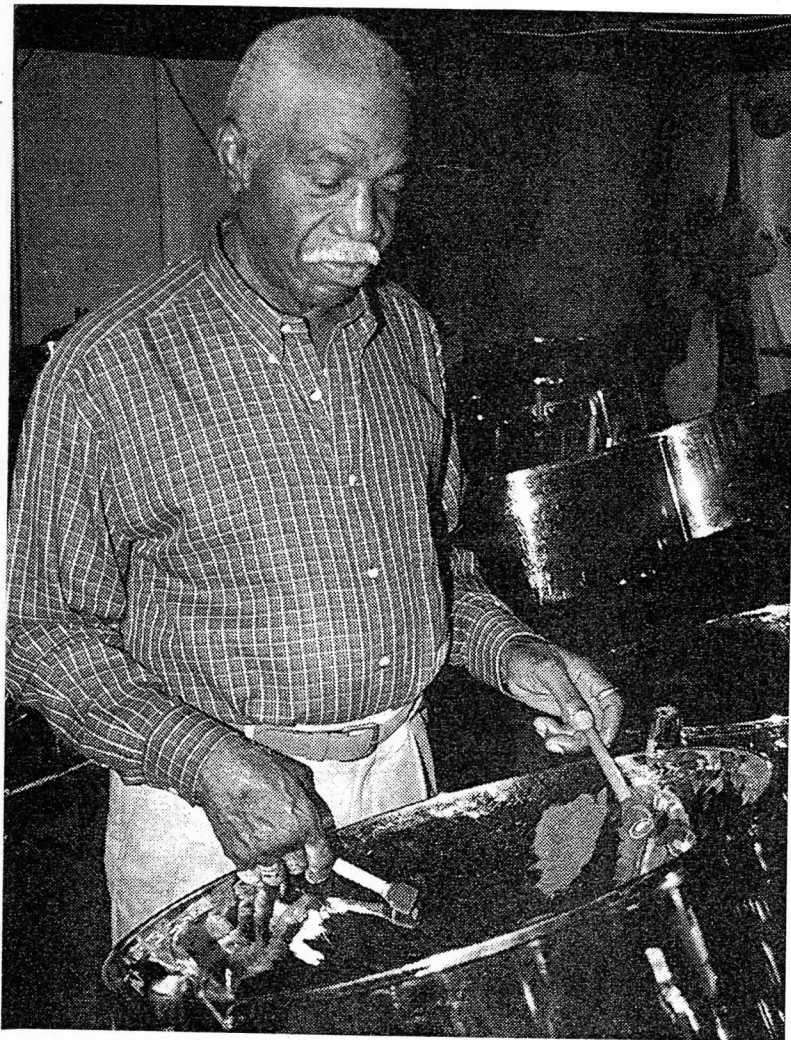
Having to play tunes section by section with your bare fingers before the awesome warrior was enough to chase the faint-hearted away."

Hart explained that fingers were used instead of sticks as part of Jules plan to keep confidential his band's repertoire before competition time.

Even after the Carnival competition, recalled Hart, Jules would ensure All Stars went to Police headquarters to play for the hard-working officers.

Jules told the *Express* that he had established the Carnival pan competition that bears his name and had created many different forms of pan, some now extinct.

Attending the event were radio personality Winston Maynard, National Carnival Commission deputy chairman Ainsworth Mohammed, Pan Trinbago president Patrick Arnold, former Pan Trinbago president Owen Serrette, and All Stars captain Beresford Hunte.



NEVILLE JULES invoking memories on the pan.

Photo: JERMAINE CRUIKSHANK