

HE DIED POOR

Anthony Harris
and

Lennox Grant

WINSTON SPREE SIMON
died poor. The man who is credited with being the first to play a tune on pan died waiting to get a home of his own.

In 1974 Spree suffered a stroke and became bed-ridden. The news of this stirred the public and a committee which was formed, launched the house-building fund.

A fund-raising show held in Woodford Square that year was massively attended by the public, but when the hat was passed only a small fraction of the targeted sum was received.

In December 1974 the organisers of the Regal Calypso Tent invited Spree Simon to declare their tent open for the season, thus hoping

symbolically to elevate the panman to the status of a dignitary.

Came 1975 and the tune "Tribute to Spree Simon" won the Road March. Chalkdust also sang a tribute to the pioneer panman.

Mas man and mystic philosopher Rudy Piggott portrayed a character called Sun Rising on Winston Spree Simon.

Still to be released is a '45 recording by Lancelot Layne entitled "Sweet Boy" which was a song originally introduced to Trinidad by Spree Simon and played a generation or more ago by Spree's own Fascinators steelband.

But the highlight of the national tribute to Spree that appeared to be gathering support was the building of the house in which the 49 year old

panman could spend the rest of his days in the comfort and secure knowledge that his efforts in pan are appreciated.

This never came about. During the 1975 Carnival season a Port-of-Spain City Council spokesman loudly promised that Spree's house would become a reality before the end of the season.

LUDICROUS

The enthusiasm for Spree in the 1974-75 period had some other ludicrous high points. One was at Panorama finals at the Dimanche Gras last year when both Lord Kitchener and Tokyo Steelband brought Spree on stage in a litter presumably to convince the judges that the venerable folk-hero endorsed their efforts.

It worked for Kitchener only.

Spree had more "honour" coming his way. Pan Trinbago presented him and other pan greats with citations during the "Pan In Rage" finals in late February.

Little public embarrassment was shown by anyone when some weeks ago a lame Spree Simon was led into newspaper offices to say the nothing about his promised house had materialised.

It wasn't until the panman died last weekend that Jack Lewse PNM party hack around-the-town public relations windbag, hit the gail to blame a shortage of materials for the delay in building a

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DIED

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Spree Simon House.

But if that kind of excuse would do in the case of a panman, it only shows something about the steelband movement and the way it's held in the public regard.

Look at the lukewarm reception some of the big names in pan got when Pan Trinbago honoured them at the Pan Fever finals this year.

Their names apparently didn't mean anything and their exploits unknown. Pan Trinbago, in any case, didn't help by providing such information at the opportune time that these men were being introduced to the huge Savannah crowd and the nation on TV.

Pan Trinbago must not make that mistake again. There will not and should not be another Spree Simon.