

ML1040

New hope for lasting 'Spree' Simon tribute

By TERRY JOSEPH

MORE than 25 years after his death, lasting tribute to pan pioneer Winston "Spree" Simon may soon become reality, due to the persistence of the Community Development Committee that bears his name.

Committee spokesman Horace Raymond yesterday said fresh hope for a commemorative postage stamp is coming from TTPost, after successive Governments had

turned down the idea.

In addition, the committee has redoubled its efforts at raising funds to have a statue erected in John John, the village where Simon lived and pioneered the 14-note tenor pan, forerunner to today's sophisticated soprano-range instrument.

"In fact, we are in the process of doing something about not only "Spree", but some other pioneers," Raymond said. "For the first time, it looks like we are get-

ting somewhere in having him properly recognised. For years we have asked the postmaster general to issue a stamp and we always got some kind of reason why not.

"Since that time, we see Brian Lara, Ato Boldon and Wendy Fitzwilliam, among others on stamps. We have nothing against that, because we are interested in honouring heroes, but we feel that Spree made a contribution too.

"Since 1985 we have been

knocking on doors of ministers of different governments and nobody took us on before, so we want to thank TTPost publicly.

"We will soon get back the painting of him on the billboard at the entrance to John John, but we are working on something more tangible. We would like to get the statue of him put up, so we could make the village a tourist attraction, as the place where pan was born," Raymond said.

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WINSTON "SPREE" SIMON

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Spotlight

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From biscuit drum discard to four-note pan

Simon, who died on April 18, 1976, is widely credited with the invention of what is now the national musical instrument. The claim has often sparked controversy, but what is not in dispute is his public premiere of the 14-note tenor pan on March 5, 1946 (Carnival Tuesday of that year). Most pan historians agree

no one had hitherto produced that level of music.

Born at Rose Hill, East Dry River in 1930, Spree was virtually ringed by factories producing biscuits and other products that used drums. Discards from those industries gave him his first "kettle-drum" and it was an accident with this prototype that

prodded him to create the 14-note pan.

His kettle-drum was a rudimentary one-note instrument, used largely for percussive highlighting in what was essentially an elaborate rhythm section, benevolently called a band.

As the story goes, one night when the band was taking a jam

through the district, he loaned his instrument to a fellow member. Upon retrieving the pan, Spree discovered it had been brutalised, much of its original convex playing surface had been beaten inward.

It was in trying to repatriate the original shape to the pan (by beating it from inside with a big

stone), he discovered different sounds coming from the various areas of the playing surface. By alternately using a piece of wood, he was able to vary tone. Spree produced a four-note pan from this experiment.

In 1970, Spree's health began a rapid deterioration. A stroke reduced his involvement in pan to a minimum and he eventually succumbed on April 18, 1976.