

Jamaica mourns

Edna Manley

Dies in sleep at 86;

Official Funeral Sunday

INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED SCULPTRESS and mother of Jamaica's modern artistic development, the Hon. Edna Manley, O.M., died in her sleep at her Retreat Avenue home Monday night, 18 days short of her 87th birthday.

Her passing triggered a wave of tributes to be climaxed by an Official Funeral Sunday afternoon and burial in National Heroes Park beside her husband, National Hero the Rt. Excellent Norman Manley who died in 1969.

Mrs. Manley's death signalled the end of 62 years of work in the arts with a wide range of local artists, whom she inspired, taught and encouraged from their earliest years.

Mother of former Prime Minister Michael Manley and his brother, Dr. Douglas Manley, Mrs. Manley was intimately concerned with Jamaica's modern political life through her late husband. She stood with him during the turbulent days of the late 1930's, the formative years of the 1940's and into the 1950's, when he was elected Premier. She was there beside her husband during the founding of the People's National Party.

But while being a concerned participant in this area of the island's life, Mrs. Manley's keen devotion to the arts was unwavering. Educated at West Cornwall College and St. Martin's School of Art in England, she created works of art from her earliest days as a student and continued through the years, almost to the day of her death. As an artist, she worked in several mediums — in wood, bronze, charcoal and pastel on masonite and stone.

Recognition of her work came from as early as 1930, when she was awarded a Silver Medal by the Institute of Jamaica and was elected to join the London Group with British artists, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. The work which brought her acclaim then was, "Eve," a bold, vibrant creation of a Jamaican girl, done in mahogany.

By 1942, she was awarded the first Gold Musgrave Medal to be presented by the Institute since the awards began in 1904. The citation said the award was in recognition of the encouragement of art and literature, which Mrs. Manley had given others.

In sharp contrast with her upbringing, as the daughter of an English minister of religion, Rev. Harvey Swithenbank and his wife, Ellie, who lived and brought up their children in England, Mrs. Manley had a deep zest for life and for creating things. Her artistic works were depictive of the eras in which she lived and reflected the changes in the political and artistic scenes, as these happened.

One critic described her early works as "very bold, Vorticist and modern and much more African in character than her later work with its symbolist-Blake influences." Another critic, Dr. David Boxer, Curator of the National Gallery, spoke of the "inspired and formal elegance of her first Jamaican works... The voluptuous masses...tamed by an underlying cubist geometry in her work of the twenties." The sculpture of "Eve," was an example of the

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early works while "The Horse of the Morning" is representative of her later work; and "Negro Aroused" was symbolic of the trauma in the movement given others.

As recently as April 1980, when she was presented the Order of Merit by the Governor-General, Sir Florizel Glasspole, Mrs. Manley unveiled an exhibition titled, "The Seventies," which depicted the developments in the ten years from 1970 to 1980.

Noted Jamaican poet, George Campbell, said the exhibition showed "the artist emerging with brighter vision after traumatic illness waving a brave spiritual inner chisel finely honed to prismatic brilliance, inquisitively, artistically engaged with renewed interest in Humanity and Creation."

Inasmuch as sculpture was the art form she used most, Mrs. Manley painted and wrote short stories, poems, plays and essays and was Editor of the anthology, *Focus*.

She was also an ardent enthusiast and supporter of all the other art forms, among them, dancing.

Perhaps her greatest influence on Jamaican art, however, came to be exerted through the Junior Centre of the Institute when Mrs. Manley, with the support of the late Robert Verity, began to conduct classes for budding young artists and others who were interested in learning to paint and sculpt. It was to that development that many of the well-known artists of modern Jamaica, among them, the late Ralph Campbell, owe their beginnings. Not only did Mrs. Manley teach them the finer points of the art, but she recommended a number of them as candidates for Brit-

ish Council scholarships to further their studies. Later on, as she opened art shows put on by these artists, she never failed to appeal to her audiences to purchase works of art in order to demonstrate their support.

She also assisted aspirant poets, playwrights and writers and was regularly consulted by these, quite apart from the formal gatherings in which they would meet in the Readers and Writers Club and other fora.

Recognition of Mrs. Manley's work came from several countries, in which she exhibited. She was acclaimed in Europe, where she exhibited in Paris and London; appeared in the 1981 issue of the British *Who's Who in Art*, a publication of the Art Trade Press of the UK; was honoured by CARIFESTA in 1981 and presented the CARIFESTA Award by the Government of Barbados as one of six outstanding Caribbean artists — "for her original, unique and lasting contribution to the development of art and literature in Jamaica and also in recognition of the considerable international distinction and eminence she has achieved both for herself and for her country in the field of sculpture."

Here at home, she was awarded the Order of Merit in 1980; in that year too, she was elected a Fellow of the Institute of Jamaica for her contribution as "Jamaica's foremost sculptor and inspirer of other artists." She was presented the Woman of Distinction Award by the Bureau of Women's Affairs in June 1985. She was honoured by Hunter College, City University of New York in 1984.

On that occasion she was described as "a Renaissance woman whose lifetime of national commit-

ment spans the transformation of a society and its creative expression." Her sculpture, it was said, exemplified the search for national identity; and it recalled that she was credited with bringing the first African carving to Jamaica in 1925 — "an act that was said to have stimulated transcultural art forms reflecting the social forces of change."

At the community level, she supported many community projects over the years; and for more than forty years, was host of an annual charity, organised by her and known as "Drumblair Revels," which she held to raise funds for community causes. Last year, she described as her "best birthday" the painting and cleaning up of the Edna Manley Clinic by the PNP Women's Movement, which she had suggested as substitute for a birthday party the Movement had planned.

Mrs. Manley was devoted to her family and was deeply involved with the upbringing of her two sons and the grandchildren who followed.

At the passing of her husband on September 2, 1969, she could be seen caressing the coffin, as she shed silent tears. Every year since then, on the occasion of National Heroes' Day, she has placed flowers on the shrine over his grave.

Prime Minister Edward Seaga, in expressing his condolences at her passing yesterday, announced that Mrs. Manley will be accorded an Official Funeral at the Kingston Parish Church on Sunday afternoon and will be buried beside her husband in National Heroes' Park, in keeping with the policy stated by him in 1981 that wives of National Heroes should be buried beside their husbands.