

KAPO — The colourful artist who had visions

By Claudine Boothe

FOR KAPO, LIFE IS A SPIRITUAL TRIP bounded on the highways by expressions of art. Its bewitching beauty is captured on canvas and his sculpture shows eerie but sensual revelation of things everlasting.

The "Little boy" in him still shows and at times he takes a keen interest in things youthful, but the man in him is a leader, the quality that has kept his brilliance simmering for many years.

He received the spiritual call at an early age. At twelve when other youngsters were flying kites and enjoying other pastimes, young Mallica Reynolds had a spiritual awakening.

In the district of Bynloss, St. Catherine, one rainy night, young Mallica dreamt he was taken down a grade (hill) by a man who was neither black nor white and wore a turban around his head.

The man inquired of Mallica whether he knew who he was and young Mallica answered in the negative. The question was repeated three times, but young Mallica had no idea.

The name

—Jesus

As he remembers, the mysterious character took a bottle from the folds of his robe and anointed the young boy three times and then he told him, in gentle tones that his name was JESUS.

Young Mallica got awake, frightened and excited, as he rushed to tell the dream to his parents.

His father thought the dream a peculiar one, so, Young Mallica then rushed to the place where the strange happening took place in his dream. He saw nothing, but he noticed that the moon seemed very large and that it suddenly disappeared from the sky towards a nearby stream where his mother and her friends were washing clothes. Mallica rushed to the stream and asked his mother if she had seen the moon fallen.

His mothers' friends laughed at him and mocked him so much that both himself and his mother became embarrassed, and his mother sent him away in anger.

Angels dancing

The following night, according to Kapo, he dreamt that he saw seventy-two angels singing and dancing in a garden shaped like the moon. One of the angels invited him to join them and seated him on a chair.

There were tables and each had flowers, a trumpet and a rod. The angels took their trumpets and blew a melodious song the like of

which he had never heard before or since.

At the end of the song, an angel gave the boy a trumpet and told him to go preach the gospel to God's people.

And so Mallica awoke from his dream even more puzzled than he was the night before. Following that, he went to his first revival meeting and got the "spirit of conversion."

He tells that the years of his youth were spent preaching and teaching the word of God. He has been all over

the Island preaching. Some people were responsive and others mocked him, but young Mallica plodded on.

When I spoke to Kapo, a name which he acquired because of his artistic nature and his kindness and wisdom, I was first amused by his quaint appearance.

Gold and silver rings adorned all his fingers and his mouth was lined with gold teeth. On his head he wore a turban and in his left hand he held a rod.

Kapo was sitting in his church, a small structure with a few roughly made benches. He was working on an oil painting. As he got up to greet me, the head of his rod, black in colour glittered with sequins set in the head. As he welcomed me, I noticed a bowl from which smoke spiralled. It was incense, his own blend of citronella oil and cedar wood dust. Was it burning for some spiritual rite? I asked. Kapo replied it was only to keep away the mosquitos. I felt cheated.

At the age of 64 Kapo the Artist, the spiritual leader, stated that he felt like a 24-year-old man.

Attracted many

He has been in the Revival cult for fifty-two years. When he was twenty-two, he came to Kingston and attracted many followers. At one stage he had a flock of nearly 1,000, he says.

Now he has sixty. He spoke of the troubled times he had as a young spiritual leader. Once, in his own home town town in St. Catherine, he entered a bar to purchase a few beers to refresh himself after the long ride from the City. When he raised his rod to rest it against the counter of the bar while getting money to pay his bill, the barmaid screamed.

Her screams brought a crowd who milled around. They accused Kapo of all kinds of things so he had to seek refuge in a friend's home. On his way back to Kingston the following evening, two policemen approached him and told him that he was under arrest.

They had received a complaint that he had taken a stick into a bar to "obeah the barmaid" as he had received

some money" to do a job of work on her."

Kapo denied this, but he was taken to his house where the policemen took \$20 from under some green leaves and showed it to him saying that he had received it for "practising obeah."

Appealed, won

He denied it, but the police took him to the Linstead lock-up where he stayed for a few hours before he was bailed. He was tried and the judge sentenced him to six months hard labour with six lashes in and six out. He appealed against the sentence and won.

His life story has been a rough one, with cruel and colourful incidents combined. He spoke of his triumphs and his frustrations and during the lengthy conversation singled out a few on which to elaborate.

Some of these were centred around the numerous attempts made on his life. When people tried to raid his belongings and disturb his house and his church. Despite the bad time, he said, his life had been most beautiful.

He has had his moments of success. He has always carved to support himself and his family. Many celebrities have visited his workshop and admired his work.

Some of these are the late Errol Flynn, the famous actor who adopted Jamaica Roberta Flack who is one of his recent fans, the late Walt Disney and many others.

Many people think of Kapo as a Poco shepherd, but he says he does not like the word "Pocomania" because it means "little madness" and he was not by any means a mad man. He preferred the word Revival, for the cult had satisfied his wild-est aspirations.

Kapo has had several exhibitions locally and abroad and now has one going at the Stony Hill Hotel with eighty-three paintings and forty pieces of sculptures.

He has been married twice and has seven children, but he is reluctant to talk about his personal life. There is much more to Kapo than what he reveals but I believe he will always keep a little of his expansive self for himself.