

NIGHTBEAT

Willie Guy Rainey takes his blues to Masonic Temple in Grant Park

By Russ DeVault
Staff Writer

Willie Guy Rainey Thursday morning did what a lot of Atlantans would have preferred to do — he got up, admired the snow and returned to bed.

But even if the snow had not been falling, he's entitled to such dispensations. He will be 82 years old April 17.

That, in itself, isn't too amazing, but what makes Rainey special is that he's still playing and singing the blues. In fact, he's planning to play some Saturday and Sunday at the opening of the Grant Park Flea Market and Trade Fair.

That's **Ross Kapstein's** creation, one intended to provide Rainey a venue and to make use of the old Masonic Temple at 464 Cherokee St.

Kapstein, who doesn't plan to charge admission and will provide refreshments, hopes to have 10 to 15 vendors occupying booths during the opening weekend.

Rainey, health permitting, will play from 3-6 p.m. both days. He's had some health problems recently — he was hospitalized because of pneumonia — but still does so much that wife Sarah says she doesn't "know where all he goes." His recent activities have included going to the Omni to meet **Eric Clapton**, who continues to acknowledge the debt that he and other current bluesmen owe to predecessors such as Rainey.

Kapstein, who feels it is important for Rainey's music to be heard, hopes the combination of the music and flea market (622-3120 for information) will eventually enable him to open a restaurant in the building, owned by a group of investors who are primarily Grant Park residents.

"It's all in the primary stage," Kapstein says, "but we like to think this will become a valuable addition to the Grant Park area."

