

...ices are scheduled Wednesday.

'Furry' Lewis dead, famed blues player

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (UPI) — Blues musician Walter "Furry" Lewis, who was once a sideman in the great W.C. Handy's band, died at City of Memphis Hospital Monday, five days after a heart attack. He was 88.

Lewis, a self-taught guitarist, was born on a plantation in Greenwood, Miss., on March 6, 1893.

For 44 years, he was a street cleaner in Memphis by day and a blues musician at night. Along the way he lost a leg in a train accident. He retired from city employment in 1966 and took up music making full time.

He earned his nickname "Furry" for his habit of wearing his hair long as a youth.

He was best known for his "bottle-neck" slide guitar-playing style in which he slipped a glass sleeve on his finger and drew it over the strings to accompany the lyrics of his sad tunes.

Besides playing the blues, Lewis himself was the subject of a 1976 hit song by Joni Mitchell, "Furry Sings the Blues."

His music earned him a part in the Burt Reynolds movie, "W.W. and the Dixie Dance Kings," an appearance on a national television special with Mac Davis, and a spot on the bill with the Rolling Stones at a Memphis concert.

Lewis was the last surviving member of the Memphis Blues Caravan, a group that toured both the United States and Europe playing old-time blues. He continued to play sporadic engagements at Memphis clubs until the last years of his life.