

Around '66 I went to a coffee house (The 11th Hour?) on the northside of Indianapolis to hear Sleepy John & Yank. I'd never heard mandolin played like that. Three years later I had a gig at the Louisville Airport for some travel club. I couldn't find a clarinet player, so I called Yank to play mandolin. I got some other guys from Chicago who could play traditional jazz...Dixieland.

The travel club flew us from Indianapolis to Louisville, I had never really talked to Yank, so I sat with him to lay out what we were going to play. When the plane started to lift off, Yank grabbed my knee...he'd never flown before.

At the airport. we set up under a wing and started in. The Dixieland morphed into blues, and Yank tore it up. We played together at the Cabaret a few times after that, then Yank began to get some gigs at music festivals. I talked to him after he'd been to Copenhagen. Yank had no idea where that was.

-- Bix Smith (Indianapolis guitarist)