

I remember well my first meeting with Yank Rachell. The first time I saw him was in 1975 at the Bluebird, a blues/rock club in Bloomington, IN. He was playing amplified mandolin in an electric band.

I remember Yank so well as a gentle courtly man who stayed and talked to me for nearly an hour, but would not allow me to buy him anything. He talked of Sleepy John, Hammie Nixon, and Sonny Boy and how he got a job on the L&N railroad at an early age by lying about his age, and, of course, the blues. Yank left me with a treasured quote, which I used in the liner notes to his *Chicago Style* LP. “You know, when you have a couple drinks, and you’re feelin’ sad and lonely, the blues just come naturally. The blues will always be there.”

Not well known is the fact that Yank preferred the electric sound to the acoustic sound, in his later years. Yank very much enjoyed playing with electric bass, electric guitar, and drums and he considered *Chicago Style*, which is thoroughly electric, his favorite recording. Yet, Yank was more than happy to indulge all those white acoustic musicians who thought they were just “letting Yank be Yank” by playing acoustic with him.

In my last conversation with Yank I remember him in very high spirits. We were talking about his age, and aging, and the mandolin. “Yeah, I’m gonna live to be a hundred, and I’m gonna die playin’ that mandolin.

--George Fish (Wrote the liner notes for the LP and CD versions of Yank’s *Chicago Style*. George is also a recording reviewer for Living Blues and Blues Access Magazines as well as reviewer and writer for Indiana Blues Monthly. George also writes for Big City Rhythm and Blues and the Web html Blues and More.)

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