

Moon Dogger

"You're talking about the 'Moon Dog Ball'? Say, that was some time ago. Alan Freed . . . I remember now."

That's guitarist "Tiny" Grimes speaking, reached by phone in New York. He remembered it all. March 21, 1952. The old Arena, 3700 Euclid Ave. Freed's whopper "Moon Dog Coronation Ball." He should.

Grimes, 64, was playing there with his four-piece band, the Highlanders, when the first crush of fans, many allegedly without tickets, started packing the hall.

"That was a heavy thing going on. Too many people, I recall.

"No, I wasn't scared. It'd happened to me other places . . . I got out OK. They always have a little exit in the back to get you away, too."

He tried to remember what songs he had played: "Bet it was 'Rock the House.' That always gets them going. Over at Gleason's they stopped us from playing that one. Let's see, some of the others we played were 'Annie Laurie' and 'Jumpin' at Gleason's.'"

Gleason's was located at E. 55th and Central, Grimes recalled.

Lloyd (Tiny) Grimes, born in Newport News, Va., is still playing, mostly in Greenwich Village or Long Island. He figures he's been at it 40 years or more.

"Cleveland was always a good music town," Grimes said.

"So they're trying to get the Hall of Fame? Good. Wish them luck," he added. "Wish I could be there for the big party."

— JANE SCOTT