Tommy Dukes was born in 1944 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. His mother, Mary McGilberry, moved to Winslow so his stepfather could work for the Nagel Lumber & Timber Company. In 1954, Mary sent Dukes and older brother Andrew one-way Greyhound Bus tickets to Winslow, where the family lived in a one-room house on Baca Street in the Southside neighborhood.

Dukes got his first guitar at age thirteen from older brother Robert Evans, and the instrument became his constant companion. He played one song repeatedly in order to master the strings, prompting his mother to think, “Lord, let my son learn another song!” Soon he taught himself to play many more by ear, especially tunes by his biggest early influence, bluesman Jimmy Reed.

Dukes set pins at the Kinsley Avenue bowling alley to buy his first electric guitar. He and friend David Chavez Sr. learned songs by watching bands from Phoenix and Albuquerque at the Arcadia Dance Hall. He played his first professional gig at age fifteen with the Blue Flames at the Pinetop Buffet. The band played across Northern Arizona for the next three years, and Jasper Renfro would also call Dukes to sit in with traveling bands performing at his Prairie Moon Bar.

Whether he was living in Winslow, Flagstaff, or Phoenix, Dukes performed regularly at multiple venues with various bands that bore his name, and they developed devoted fan bases in each city. Playing original material as well as R&B and traditional blues covers, he was known for his personality and rapport with audiences. He released his first CD – *Tommy Dukes, Keeping the Blues Alive* – in 1996.

The following year, Dukes was the first Northern Arizona musician to be inducted into the Arizona Blues Hall of Fame, which he considered “a great thrill. A lot of times, people will be dead before they get real recognition. I've paid my dues, and this is a great pleasure.” Dukes performed at the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Arkansas in 2005, the International Blues Challenge in Memphis in 2007, and with notable artists such as Bobby “Blue” Bland, Lonnie Brooks, Tyrone Davis, John Lee Hooker, Little Anthony and the Imperials, and Joe Louis Walker.

Dukes misses the days when Winslow had more performance venues, but he considers it home and returned permanently in 1983. He continues to play around Northern Arizona and Phoenix because, “no matter what, I am always going to be playing the Blues.”