



Donald M Bryant 1998

DONALD M. BRYANT

I grew up in Greenville, SC and attended Greenville High where I graduated in '56. My first encounter with shagging was at a Jr.High party in '51. As I stood at the rear of the crowd with my back against the wall, I watched several of my classmates having, what seemed to me, the best time dancing with all of the girls. I resolved then and there that I had been missing out, and this fast dance - *the shag* was something I needed to learn .

Being a teenager in the early fifties was great! Duck tails, tailored trousers, shirts with "Mr. B" collars, James Dean's red wind breakers, just hanging out at the drive-in; The Clock , Petes, or Cahaley's on Augusta Rd. Summer days at Pine Grove Lake, dancing on a sandy wood floor to juke box music by the Dominos, Clovers, Ruth Brown, Johnny Ace, Bostic and more. In the fall, the same every Saturday night at the teen canteen. That's where I would watch Jack Cahill unquestionably the smoothest dancer in Greenville or Jo Jo Putnam with all his high steps, or "Beaver" Greenway, David Smith, "Hog" McGinis, Don "Baby" Edwards, and Toby Long. In my eyes these guys were *giants*. Some could dance better than others but they all had one thing in common , They all had "panache"- style, an attitude, in a word of our generation, **cool**. I watched these guys and copied steps and style whenever I could.

The Beach

My first adventure at the beach was just forty five (45) years ago-Summer of '53- I told my parents I was staying with my friend, Jim Long and his family at Myrtle Beach State Park. He told his parents the same about my family *and we were off to the beach alone!* We actually stayed in Jim's '40 Ford coupe and lived on popcorn or if we were lucky enough to find a girls' house party, we would wrangle some real food- hot dogs or spam sandwiches. In 1953 it was the Pavilion at Myrtle or Spivey's on down south, until Hazel. Later it was The Pad at O.D. and Sonny's at Cherry Grove. From that first summer on through college, I met and was influenced by a host of great dancers and some became lasting friends, like Domer Reeves, Mac Windham, Helen McMahan(Weir) and Wanda Walker (Holliday). Other interesting and unique personalities were, "One Lung" "Rat Bait" "Sleepy" "Wormy" and Belton Stevens, most were straight out of a Damon Runyan short story, truly lovable, unforgettable and worth knowing.

College

After Greenville High, I was college bound to Columbia S.C. and USC. It wasn't long before I joined the fraternity best known for it's parties and dancers, Pi Kappa Phi. It was there that I met Rufus Wactor. His smooth style and intricate steps (that always work out to the count) are unmatched. I learned (stole) almost all of the steps and style that I have today from Rufus—I got him "high" one night at a local pub and *persuaded* him to show me such steps as the Chicken and the Boogie Train. Back then your steps were your personal property and there were no schools or classes -I had to do what I had to do.

Today

While at USC I was captivated by a young beauty at Columbia College, Sandra Banks! She is the perfect *10* dance partner, her natural poise and grace always make me look better than I am. Our mutual love of the dance brought us together and from that grew a marriage of 35 years.

The Shag has truly been a moving thread through the fabric of my life, and to set down my name among The Hall of Fame Members is a lifetime accolade.