



Rick Shackelford 2005

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In every sense of the word, Columbia, S.C. is my home. I was born there, raised there, went to college there, and I learned to dance there during the summer I turned fourteen. Betty Ann Hagins taught me the basic then drilled me for three months, teaching me the dance I learned to love. By August of that year, I had in my limited arsenal the best "ice breaker" line man ever conceived: "Would you like to dance?"

Since I was in high school with "shag pioneers", Billy Moffat, Frances Hyman and later my very good friend Phyllis Keller, at age sixteen I was introduced to the Holy City of Ocean Drive. At that time, there were two places to worship. The Pad and the O.D. Pavilion, and I was very devout. Young dancers in Columbia could dance at sock hops, community centers and formal dances. During college we danced in clubs, beer joints, fraternity parties and many an afternoon at the Columbia College canteen. Then there were those spring weekend trips to the beach- Easter, Mother's Day and the first week in June were all pilgrimages to the Holy City. The summers were special too with music, GIRLS, sand, GIRLS, dancing and GIRLS. Well, you get the picture.

After college I turned my energies toward career and after marrying a Georgia girl, Dale Thomas, towards family. Dale and I met in Charlotte, N.C. where our careers had placed us, and after a four month courtship married. We soon had two daughters, Christie and Beth. Making a living and raising kids make you act like an adult and as the years piled up dancing faded more and more into my youth.

In 1980 Swink Laughter invited his buddies to Ocean Drive for a party. Thousands of us showed up, many of us who had never met Swink. SOS was an epiphany for me. Instantly I was transformed into a teenager running into old friends like Johnny Nettle, Don and Sandra Bryant, Jean Boston, Rufus Wactor, Dennis Sides, Boney Moore and on and on, plus meeting new friends. I've been a teenager ever since. I still have to act like an adult every now and then but deep inside I'm chomping at the bit to return to the beach. As a wise man once said, "growing older is inevitable, growing up is optional".

The hair is thinner and grayer, the steps slower, but if you lead with your right foot: "WOULD YOU LIKE TO DANCE?"