



Tom Shipman 2012

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It was 1957 and I was just a 15 year old kid from Hickory, NC looking for some independence and adventure. Myrtle Beach here I come! That was the first of three summers working at “the beach” and who would have ever thought that would lead to any type of celebrity status? Yet here I stand, honored and humbled, being inducted into the 2012 Shaggers Hall of Fame. Pretty Cool!

That first summer I was very lucky! “Sleepy” and Smiley” were two of my roommates and little did I know they were to be legends. I worked for “Smiley” that first summer, he was a lifeguard and I was his assistant! That meant “Smiley” could sit “in the tower” and talk with all the chicks while I got to put up umbrellas and chairs for the blue heads (as we called the senior ladies then). “Smiley” later became governor of the shaggin’ state-South Carolina.

There were other legends and really cool beach guys and I studied all the great dancers. When the summer ended, I went back to Hickory and danced with the doorknob; the bedpost; and anything else I could grab hold of including a few girls. Jimmy Dingler (1984 SHOF) was my local idol and he advised me but one thing- smooth, Tom smooth! Jimmy was really cool and that became my creed for shagging.

The MUSIC was also very important to me! I simply loved R&B and almost every night at 10:00pm EST, I tuned in to WLAC in Gallatin, TN an AM station 1510 to the far right on the dial. Listening to Randy’s or Ernie’s or Buckley’s late into the night, I would learn all the great black artists and groups. Green Eyes by Jimmy Ricks and the Ravens was my first “favorite” song and the “Jivin Hossman” Bill Allen was my favorite DJ. And you simply could not forget those great commercials for Royal Crown Hair Dressing and White Rose Petroleum Jelly! Lordy, I got “educated” just listening to the radio with the likes of *Annie Had a Baby*; *Vicious, Vicious Volka*; *One Mint Julep*; and *Your Cash Ain’t Nothing But Trash!*

Well, two more summers working at the beach (one summer at Sloppy Joe’s Bingo Stand- now Ripley’s and the other doing construction work at the Air Force Base and the BOQ’s) and I had two of the major ingredients for SHOF—love of the dance and love of the music. Next up was experience and the people!

The 60’s found me in Raleigh at NC State and dancing at Jim Thornton’s and the Scrambled Dog and meeting folks like Cecil and Linda Squires, John and Pee Wee Teel, Francis Brinkley and many others. By the late 70’s I started dancing competitively and living in Greensboro now. The Bushes gave me a home. I really never did have a “regular” partner, so the “mirror-image” dancing was not really my cup of tea. Oft times I would just grab the best available “local” dancer and enter the contest wherever it was! Didn’t win a whole lot that way, but more times than not, I finished in the money and I sure did have lots of fun! And by the way, to show my support of the dance and the music, I would send Chris Beachley a percentage of my winnings to financially assist his magazine *IT WILL STAND*.

In early 80’s I became co-owner of Treasure Chest Records in Raleigh; co-founded Ocean Drive North, a beach club in Rocky Mount, NC; and assisted in forming the SPA (Shag Preservation Association). And in 1987, I hung up my rock’n roll shoes. But in 2010 and with the encouragement of Sarah and Danny Bean, I dusted off my shoes and returned to the dance and the people! **THE MUSIC NEVER STOPPED!**