



Mimi Marshburn Benedict 2003

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Dancing has played such an important part in my life beginning at a very early age. My father was an entertainer in the 30's and I was his little helper. Some of my memories go back to nightclubs at age 4 and 5 dancing with my daddy and watching him sing "Daddy's Little Girl" to me. The only other thing I remember is drinking a lot of Shirley Temples. I lost my daddy and that ended my dancing until I was sent to Carolina Beach every summer from around 1944 to live with my rich uncle (he had a job). Never being bashful, I made many friends dancing to the juke boxes playing loud and unforgettable music such as Wynonie Harris' "Good Rockin' Tonight"... I can still hear that song in my head right now after 60 years. Most of the jump joints had cement floors except for the Ocean Plaza and shoes did not last long. I got in trouble often going home with no shoes and swollen feet that only clown shoes would fit. Maybe, I also got in trouble never going home for meals. My buddies (believe they were Bad Eye and Jack Rickard) worked at Patterson's French Fries in front of the life-guard stand and they kept me well fed as I ran from one joint to another with the crowd. Year after year we teenagers were like rebels in our hometown since dancing was about the only thing in our young lives. Square Dancing was acceptable more readily than what we did and it was sometimes called dirty dancing but not like the movie. Pretty sure we were doing belly rolls and stuff like that. This certain group of dancers were watched and copied as we managed to be together every summer and that also evolved into the winter. We did not have telephones, fax machines, e-mail- - - nothing - - - but we always knew where the dancing was going on. Anyone who could get a car was our prey to get a ride to some of our dance spots such as Batson' Bath House and The Roof at Carolina Beach, Lumina at Wrightsville, The Pavilion at Myrtle Beach, Grays at Dunn, Stewart's Lake in Raleigh, Merle's Lake at Knightdale, White Lake, Pullen Park and Memorial Auditorium in Raleigh (Harry Driver could always get us in these paying places with "we're with the band". It worked) Lots of times we were with the band by following Jimmy Calavalo's band everywhere they played. I remember Bobby Wrenn on drums and a fellow named Woody on bass and of course Jimmy on sax. That when I met Clarice Reavis and Marilyn Hodges. Clarice's husband owned a radio station in Fayetteville and sponsored the band and Marilyn was Clarice's friend. Too many friends over the years to name them all. My most constant girlfriends were Jean Allen Ferguson, Louise Walden Hunsucker, Tereasa Shedan, Joyce Lawson, Big Red, Peggy McCurdy and later in life for twenty years a very close friend, Clarice, Shag Queen. We all thought we were great dancers with some, of course, better than others. I don't know of remember if I was a great dancer or not, but it was everything to me. It's hard to explain these wonderful years if you weren't there, it's a feeling and , frankly, I still feel it!