



O'Neal Branche Bourne 2005

O'NEAL BRANCHE BOURNE

I had my first dance birthday party at the ripe old age of twelve at the Armory in Red Springs, NC. Of course, the bedpost and doorknob were my best partners.

In 1964 my family moved to Ocean Drive, and I worked on the horseshoe at Wood's 5&10. After work I would walk across the street to the pavilion, where I found something wonderful in the back-- a dance floor, a jukebox, and a wonderful dance called "THE SHAG". It was love at first sight. The next stop was Fork's Drive-In located at Nixon's Crossroads, where there was a covered dance floor in the back with a jukebox. The family who owned it, The Livingstons, made me and my younger brother, who is known as Tar to the locals, a part of their family. He worked curb service while I helped in the front, however, every chance I got I was on the dance floor. One of the dancers that I remember in particular is Bill Hussey, who to this day I still enjoy hitting the floor with at the Ocean Drive Pavilion.

During the summer of 1969, my home away from home was Fat Harold's Spanish Galleon. There I first danced with Jimmy Soles. It was great when I moved back home and started going out again and saw him. He was a good dancer then, and a great dancer now. Donnie Christenbury, who probably doesn't even remember, gave me some good pointers on smoothness. Smoothness has always been a very important part of the dance to me. In October of 1969 I moved to Raleigh, NC, where my dancing really took off. I met my first husband, Carl Smith. He introduced me to The Cat's Eye, The Embers Club and The Jolly Knave on Hillsborough Street. Other great dancers, who I spent many hours on the floor with, included Tubby Madden, Mickey Weeks, Spider Kirkman, Shad Alberty, Bobby Griffin and Tommy White. After our marriage ended, I continued to dance and competed some. My two main partners were Arnold King and Tommy "Bones" Hussey. Other memories are wonderful trips to Greensboro, the Jolly Knave at Atlantic Beach, and Red's In Kinston.

In 1977 Norfleet and Emily Jones, Arnold King and myself opened a joint called "The Place" in Raleigh. It never seemed to get off the ground; but we had some great evenings, a few small contests, and one wonderful New Year's Party.

In 1979 I met and married Leo Bourne and our son Kevin was born in 1982. Leo was military, so the dancing stopped and the moving started.

I moved back to the beach in 1992; and after several years, I decided to go out and dance. Well I'm home again. I feel like I have come full circle back where it all began for me-- "The Ocean Drive Pavilion". We continue to dance there on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Some of my partners have changed, but my love of the dance will never change. There is a family-like feeling among Shaggers, which I will always treasure. The friendships made over the years are always there no matter how long it has been since you last saw each other.