



Jean Allen Ferguson 1983

JEAN ALLEN FERGUSON

During the early years (I almost wrote "In The Beginning"), it was THE DANCE! "Fast dancing", now the Shag. DANCING, DANCING, DANCING! Hoping for rain, so the boys could close down the beach umbrellas and we could all go dancing inside at the Marine Room of the Ocean Plaza Hotel. Dancing and parties and music. Following Stan Kenton around in a caravan during a one-night-stand tour of the South for so many days they began giving us free tickets. Driving to New York (I still don't know where we got the money) to hear Kenton and the Four Freshmen at Birdland where we were such enthusiastic fans they gave us a special table right in front of the stage. Nat King Cole; Sara Vaughan; Earl Bostic; Louis Prima and Keely; but I'd better stop - I might leave out a name important to someone.

Now I know that, while dancing and parties and music are still fun and I love it all as much as ever, it's the friendships we formed during those days that have deepened in the years since, and the new friends in the later years, that are truly important. I am not going to begin naming names. If I inadvertently left anyone out, I would never forgive myself. You know who you are, and each and every one of you is so very, very precious to me. I hope you know that too.

But I will recall the places, or at least some of them, to share with you the memories of wonderful, carefree times that just remembering their names brings back. The juke box at the Myrtle Beach Pavilion; Spivey's; the Rec Center (Beach Club); the 8th Avenue Grill; the Seaside Restaurant; Ma Bagget's; Blueberry Hill; Barringers; Sonny's Pavilion and the Pad at OD; White Lake; the Sandflea in Greenville, and later Fat Harold's and Ducks.

It seems like we all started fast dancing when very young. I don't know if I started learning any younger than anyone else, but I was lucky in having an older brother who let me go with him to the places where he and his friends danced, and I can remember dancing when I was twelve. And we all seem to have found our way to the beach at a "tender age." Starting at Carolina Beach, I was there before and during the Cavallo years. The managers of the Roof repeatedly "discovered" that I was underage. I arrived at Myrtle Beach in my mid-teens and have never stopped coming back. I was lucky those first summers - I had a host of "big brothers" to protect me - and, again, you know who you are.

There is one name I do want to mention, because it was Rick Hubbard's idea that led to the wonderful reunions we have all enjoyed, and to the establishment of the Hall of Fame. It has been a great honor to me to have been involved from the beginning, and to have been elected the first President of the Hall of Fame.

I will always enjoy fast dancing, the music and parties. But it's the reunions that are so special to me. That is when I have the chance to be with so many of you, whose friendship I treasure more than all the rest. Thank you, Rick.