



Linda Oltmann Walker 2008

LINDA OLTMANN WALKER

My life has been blessed in many ways. I was born and raised in Charleston, S.C. into a dancing family with music in my life everyday. Growing up in The "Holy City" was great for many reasons but one of the best was because it allowed me to spend my young and teen years shaggin' on the old Folly Beach Pier. My twin brothers, Billy and Stewart and older sister Judy, taught me how to shag when I was in first grade so they could practice before going out on dates. I can recall dancing with my Dad at a very young age to "60-Minute Man" when he and his friends would sing it in the kitchen at their parties. My mom, a dance instructor for over 60 years, always made sure that I could reverse everything to the "other" foot to make me a more flexible dancer....guess she knew someday I would follow in her footsteps.

Dance has always been the center of my life, only taking a backseat when marriage and having a daughter came into the picture.

I started dancing at age 3 with ballet, tap, jazz, and moving on the other types as I got older. In the early 60's, when I got my driver's license, I would sneak quick trips to Ocean Drive and spend the day watching some of the shag icons of that time "burn up the floor". I was in awe and wanted to absorb everything they were doing. Back in Charleston, I would try to practice what I had seen by going to places like Art' Old Side on Isle of Palms, the Folly Pier and the old Merchant Seaman's Club. My brothers were lifeguards at Folly and would allow me to go up to the Pier and "fast dance" with some of the "older guys": like Sonny Snell, Mike Flato, and Larry Haley. I can remember spending a few Sunday afternoons with John and Joan English, tweaking my pivot.

In the summers of 1965 and 1966, I lived in Myrtle Beach, choreographing shows and performing at the Myrtle Beach Pavilion with a group called the Villagers. When I wasn't working, some girlfriends and I would ride up to OD and shag every free minute we could.

Like most of us, there was a break in my OD trips to do the "family thing" and to raise a beautiful daughter, Tiffany, who is now the third-generation in our family-owned dance studio, Trudy's School of Dance, which has been operating since 1939.

Back in the fall of 1980, there was a club called "Mirage" and then owner John Robinson called and asked Mike Flato and me to teach shag lessons. By offering a place to shag every week after lessons, it brought in some already great dancers there to just have fun and share steps....like Ann and Lloyd Moore, Roger and Peggy Burris, Gale and Claude Robertson, just to name a few. The Charleston Shag Club was begun about that time and is still going strong.

In the '90's I started coming back to the beach and got back into "the dance". I have made many new friends and gotten reacquainted with some from the '80's that I met when they were competing around the Carolinas, including Charleston at the Mirage.

And here we are now, 2008, and what an honor this is for me to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. To be recognized and honored for something I love doing is so humbling. I am grateful to the members of the Hall of Fame for my induction and want to thank all who support my being here.

Keeping the dance and the music alive is a responsibility that belongs to all of us. I promise that I will do my part for the preservation of The Dance, The Music and The Shaggers Hall of Fame.