



Donnie Pitts Hodnett 2009

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I grew up in Durham, N.C. where I graduated from Durham High School and Croft Business College. In 1954 East Durham had a new Youth Center and there I learned to fast dance. I was 13. The basic, the boogie walk, the belly roll, the sugarfoot, the stutter step and many other steps were all taught and done without a count.

In 1956 Tommy Jones asked me to be his partner on WTVD's Top Ten Dance Party hosted by Ty Boyd. This was huge to be on TB in 1956. Kids from different parts of Durham would compete. We have many laughs today about my new red dress with my stiff red crinolines and my worn out shoes from dancing. In 1956, I had my first dance with Larry Blake at Barfield Youth Center, I was 16.

Every time we got a chance to go to the beach we headed for The Ocean Plaza at Carolina Beach. We danced at lakes, swimming pools, drugstores, youth centers and any place that had a Juke Box.

Marriage and raising my son, Lynn, took me away from dancing for several years but once single the dance was beckoning me once again. I still remember the first day that my dear friend Bob Myrick and I met and danced. I have been so blessed to have met some great friends. I met Buzz Sawyer at Red's in Raleigh, where I also met John & PeeWee Teel, Linda & Cecil Squires, Charles Gurley and Kathy, Betty Jean and Charles Jernigan. Going to Elliott's Nest, that Norfleet Jones owned in Raleigh. Dancing with Sam McIntosh at the birthday parties that Gayle gave Lee Huggins every year in Fayetteville. Dancing with Norman Holliday while Wanda visited during breaks at a contest they would be judging. Always enjoying the smooth dances I had with Norfleet. Laughing and dancing with my dear friend Bill Young. Friends in Greensboro, Ed Page, Jack Smith, Kim Maynard and the list goes on and on. All of these people had rhythm, had style-their own style, and no two dancers looked alike. They were great dancers-all of them. I've met some of the most loving, beautiful, friendly ladies through this dance. They have allowed me to dance with their husbands, boyfriends, and brothers and always welcomed me with open arms. I hope that someday I will get the chance to teach my two grandsons, Dustin and Cody this wonderful dance called Shag.

I was invited to dance in the First Master ever held at Harold's Beside the Pad in 1990 and was so excited that I could take part in this along with Chicken Hicks, Dewey Kennedy, Dennis Sides and Janet Harrold and others. I was featured in a PBS Documentary about Beach Music and Shag in 2001. I was honored by the recognition but I would only do this if it included Larry Blake. In 2003, I was awarded Shagging Icon by SOS. The Shaggers Hall of Fame award is the epitome of honor in the Shag World and I am truly honored to be a member of the Shaggers Hall of Fame!