



Bill Drew

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I was born on April 23, 1944 in Anderson, S.C. and luckily I had parents who loved to vacation near Ocean Drive Beach. So from the early 1950's through the early 1960's I spent two to six weeks a year here at O.D. Moreover, my parent's favorite family evening entertainment was to go to the Pavilion and "watch the young people dance!" You could also find me at an early age hanging out across the street at the Pad watching through the lattice work and sniffing the beer odor. So from my youth I had a healthy appreciation for the shag, and by my early teens with additional help from some older girls, I learned to dance—but in retrospect not very well.

During my high school and college years I came to O.D. annually at the end of each school year with a group of friends and stayed until my money ran out (and then some). On one of these occasions in June 1964 I found Sharli at Sonny's Pavilion, and we had our first date. It was not exactly "love at first sight", but we have been together ever since. Although we were pretty good dancers and shagged at every opportunity, there was not a "whole lot of shagging going on" during our next five years as I finished my undergraduate work at Duke and law school at the University of Virginia. The same was true of the next eleven years in Charlotte, N.C. which were consumed with my career, paying off school debts and rearing our family.

Nevertheless, O.D. continued to be our favorite vacation spot, and in 1980 during a walk along the beach on the Saturday afternoon before Labor Day, we stopped in Fat Jack's for a beer. In there we caught a glimpse of the annual Labor Day shag contest, and we were hooked. We attended every minute of the rest of the contest and learned about Groucho's in Charlotte. We became Saturday night regulars at Groucho's, although at first rarely brave enough to venture onto the dance floor. There we met Shad and Brenda Alberty and late 1981 or early 1982 began attending their group shag dance classes that evolved into a rarely-missed weekly social event. This led to our participating in "local contests" around Charlotte and during visits to O.D. In 1985 we began entering SPA contests and for the next 16 years were regular participants in those, the Nationals and later the Grand Nationals.

From an early age it had been engrained in me that when you enjoy or appreciate something, you have to "give something back to it" so during this period we were quite involved with competitive dancing and served as the "dancers' representatives" to SPA in the late 1980's, were instrumental in organizing the Competitive Shaggers Association (CSA) in 1992, and held leadership roles in the organization through 2000. In late 2000 a debilitation illness (along with "old age") ended my competitive dancing career, but not my love of the dance, the music, and most of all the people.

In 1984 Sharli and our teen-aged children had begun spending their summers in O.D. and by 1988 Sharli had begun spending almost all of her time here. To keep up, I did a weekly week-end commute from Charlotte until my illness, and finally we made O.D. our permanent home in 2002. Although no longer dancing in contest, I have continued to stay involved in shagging and have tried to contribute to the dance with my legal skills and in any other way I can.

I am humbled to have been made a member of the Hall of Fame and honored to be included among such great people whom I admire and appreciate for their talent, their camaraderie and their having done so much to preserve the dance that means so much to me.