



# Sandra Schwartz 1991

## SANDRA SCHWARTZ

I was born in Charlotte on a cold December day and spent my youth there. My family would vacation to the N.C. beaches and when I grew into my early teens I drifted down towards the Ocean Drive area. I'll never forget watching Doug Perry, Shad Alberty and Tommy White at Carolina Beach or sitting on the bleachers at Sonny's Pavilion at Cherry Grove drooling at Harry Driver, Spider Kirkman and Eddie Page and then meeting Mike Osborne, who was sweet enough to show me something about the style and grace of this dance. I was a shy, skinny, freckle-faced kid that nobody knew.

Then I met Buzz Sawyer and Nicky Panos and Roscoe Goad and a few others and really started dancing a lot. The dance helped me overcome my shyness. I remember well those cool guys that drove their convertibles and wore tailor-made pants that had flaps on the pockets and pegged at the cuffs, and bleached haired hunks who would saunter across the sandy floor at one of those outdoor pavilions and say something like, "Hit the floor, Baby", meaning, "Would you like to dance?" to one of us breathless girls wearing short-shorts and we would nearly faint. As a matter of fact, I married one of the good dancers later and had three wonderful children.

Rusty Shoup is my twenty-nine year old son who is a pilot in the Marine Corps, and his twin sister, Robyn, lives and works in West Palm Beach, Fla. Jeff, my twenty-six year old, lives at N. Myrtle Beach and has his own video company. I was divorced and later married Elliott Schwartz and had another son, Harry, who is seventeen and presently enrolled in a prep school.

Getting back to the dance, all of us have experienced special times in our lives when friendships are sealed with a love-long permanency that defies the rigors of the work-a-day world. Such moments bonding are not unique or innovative to the group of beach-lovers that frequented the beach during the forties and fifties.

We've all experienced the simple mention of a moment, a name perhaps even a song that triggers a reflex of sense memory, transporting us with electrifying authenticity to some cherished point in our past. What made this particular group of people different was that amid this wonderful, sunny, sandy, fairy-tale, seashore environment for male and female "experimentation" was a music and dance we could call our own. I feel lucky to have been there near the beginning when it was all new and untamed.

I moved to the beach about seven years ago and became involved in supporting the dance contests that had sprung up all over both Carolinas. And, when the mixed doubles began, I found my true niche, as I had no steady dance partner. Drawing a dance partner and also a song to dance to is, to me, the truest form of competition. There is no practicing before-hand and no song to make up a routine to; just freestyle dancing -- and that's my strong suit, if I have one. I entered and won most of the contests in the 80's. Harold Bessent, my sweet friend, honored me greatly a couple years ago by naming his winter contest after me. I can't tell you how flattering it is to have been named by Fat Harold's Beach Club as the dancer of the decade at the end of that first contest in my honor. To be named among the best females like Glenda Johnson, Ellen Taylor, Wanda Holliday, Babs McIntosh, Jeannie Pack and Janet Harold is, indeed a thrill.

And, now, to be selected to the Hall of Fame, is the epitome of everything I have ever dreamed. It is the pinnacle of anyone's dream who has come to love the music, the people and the dance itself. I am so grateful to have my name placed beside the best of the best and I will always be so very proud of the honor. It fills me with humility and I will never forget the memories and good times that this dance has brought into my life.

I toast all of those who have come before me and look forward to watching the next generation carry on the tradition and truly feel like everyone in this great Hall of Fame has made a distinct contribution to perpetuating this wonderful part of our culture.