



Sandra Banks Bryant 1992

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My sister Betty, who is a wonderful dancer was the first person to spark a love of shagging in me. I can vividly remember the dance lessons holding onto the chest of drawers practicing the Sugar Foot over and over again. The summer that I was about eleven years old, Betty and her friends had me dance with Sonny Snell at the Folly Beach bowling alley. Sonny, who is Carolyn Hedrick's brother, was the best on the beach at that time and my first experience dancing with a male who could dance. What fun! I was hooked.

Every summer a group from my church in Holly Hill would go on a house party to Myrtle Beach. We were allowed to dance at the pavilion but later in the evening when all the older kids left to go to Spivey's, we were left behind. One summer I met Tommy Mills who lied and said he was 18, I lied and said I was 16. . . We were both 14. We were dancing and he asked if I could do the belly roll. I indignately replied that I was not that kind of girl and walked off the floor. I definitely don't think I was quite ready to go to Spivey's.

After high school I went to Columbia College where we had a wonderful canteen called Shangri-La where each night Carolina boys would come over to dance. Rick Shackelford was kind enough to show me some steps and dance with me many hours. Of course, there were many, many hours spent in the dorm dancing with that old door knob and each other -- teaching each other steps and making up new ones. Some of the best female dancers that I have ever known were at Columbia College during those years. Among them were Jean Boston Clark, Renie Fridy and Linda Carol Flynn.

Then in 1960 I met a young man who had a rather large impact on my life -- my husband Don. Don and I shared a common love for dancing. He taught me about developing style, dancing smoothly and doing mirror steps. Many of these steps were "stolen" from Rufus Wactor. Don and Rufus roomed together at Carolina for a while and were both members of Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity which was known for its good dancers. Many happy summers were spent dancing at the Pad and late night at Sonny's.

For many years dancing took a back seat to raising three children and getting a business going. Then in 1980, we heard about a dance contest that was taking place Labor Day at Fat Jack's, Ocean Drive Beach. We didn't think there were that many people around who could still shag but decided we'd go and take a look. We rolled in late Friday night and were we in for a shock! The place was full of some of the best dancers we had ever seen. We were mesmerized. It was like dropping back in time.

The very next weekend was the first S.O.S. and by this time, we had bought a condo at Cherry Grove, grabbed Dick and Linda Terry and headed to the beach for many fun years of doing what we love best. We found Rufus Wactor, brought him out of seclusion and re-taught him some of those dance steps that Don had "stolen" from him. I have permanent knee damage from doing the Boogie Train over and over. The man's a perfectionist.

Every year Don and I think that shagging will die out, but every year it seems to get stronger. In the last few years we have met a group of people through Billy and Jeannie Pack who love dancing just for the pure joy of doing it. No contest, no pressure -- just fun. A large number of these people are in the Hall of Fame and with them we have found again what made all this so special years ago . . . good people, camaraderie, happy times and love of a dance -- the Shag.