



Betty Jean Jernigan 2004

BETTY JEAN JERNIGAN

My first introduction to dancing was when I was in Junior High School in Raleigh, North Carolina. A lot of the kids were going to the gymnasium and dancing, and I went to see what it was all about. I loved the music they were dancing to and asked a friend, who was a little older than me, if she would teach me what they were doing. She taught me the basic shag, and after that I danced all the time. A friend, Julia Snottherly, would come over to my house and we would dance all over the kitchen and my mother would get so mad because we would mark up the floor, but we didn't care, we loved it so much.

When I was in high school we would go to the Teenage Frolics television show in Raleigh, where kids would dance on TV every Saturday morning, and then to Pullen Park where dances were held on Saturday afternoon. I just couldn't get enough of it. Even in high school we had a jukebox in the lounge. Kids would skip lunch just to go dance during that time. Everyone seemed crazy for the music and any chance to dance, even while at school. One of the highlights of being a teenager was going to Carolina Beach to a place called the "Ocean Plaza", where a jukebox had the most amazing music.

When I got a little older I met a guy named Norfleet Jones, who became a close friend and we began going to some local clubs such as the Scrambled Dog and Jim Thorntons Dance Club. There were so many wonderful dancers there and I met some guys that would come there often like Doug Perry, Shad Alberty, and two guys named Louie Johnson and Charles Jernigan. Everyone had their own style and they were all good dancers. We would get in a circle and each would take turns in the circle showing what they could do, and boy could they dance. I was introduced to Charles and he seemed to enjoy dancing as much as I did, and he asked me out the following weekend. From that meeting we have had 43 years of love and friendship.

We had two children, Debbie and Danny, and stayed home to raise our family until they were about sixteen. Norfleet would come by our house and constantly ask if we would come out with him since we hadn't been out in so long. In 1978 we finally said yes and went to his club, Elliot's Nest, in underground Cameron Village. We couldn't believe that people were still dancing like we used to do and fell in love with the dance all over again. We met dancers like John and Pee Wee Teel, Cecil and Linda Squires, Bob and Carol Myrick, and many others. It was as if time had stood still for us.

When shag contests became popular in the late 70s Charles and I would go all over North and South Carolina dancing and competing. Through them we met Sam and Babs McIntosh and Connie and Jack Smith, just to name a few of the fantastic dancers that were there. This became a special time in our lives and I carry wonderful memories of the music, the clubs, and the many people we have met through the dance.

We still love the music and dance and whenever possible get together with old friends and hopefully meet new ones that love the dance as much as Charles and I. I am so thrilled to have been selected for the Shaggers Hall of Fame, and will treasure this honor forever.