



Carl Smith 2006

CARL SMITH

Being born and raised in Conway, SC, I had early exposure to "The Music" and "The Dance". As a very young lad, my Dad would take me and my brother to swim at the Swash at Myrtle Beach. Late in the afternoons, we would go across the street to Spivey's Pavilion. The old man would have a few beers and I would listen to the music and watch the dancers of that time. That era of my life sadly ended in 1954 when a lady named "Hazel" hit the beach. I was 10 years old. I knew then this lifestyle was for me.

The summer of 1957, I started working at Sloppy Joes at the beach. I worked there off and on all during high school as short order cook and part time bingo caller. After work I would go to the Pavilion juke box and watch the dancers. That is where I first saw Johnny Barringer. The summer of 1958, I got the nerve to start dancing. Like most young dancers of that time, I had a nickname. Mine was "Lightnin", after a character on the old Amos & Andy show. Old friends still alive from that era still call me "Lightnin".

During those early years, I would dance and watch other dancers at the Pad, Sonny's and the Forks Drive-In. I was in awe of dancers like Shad, Jo Jo, Spider Kirkman, Doug Perry and Tommy White. Tommy was also from Conway and later became one of my closest friends as did the others.

I left the beach after the summer of 1964 and have lived, traveled and danced allover North and South Carolina. Over these many years I have met, befriended, competed against and partied with Mike Osborne, Buz Sawyer, Glen Doub, Ronnie Duggins, Norfleet Jones, Steve Rouse, Sam McIntosh, Bobby Griffin, Charles Gurley and many, many more great dancers.

I have danced with about all the great Girl Dancers of my generation and many of the generation of dancers before me. I have been married twice. Once to O'Neal Branch who is still a friend and for the last 26 years to my lovely bride" Ms. Lynne".

I have always believed that a bad day drinking, dancing and chasing the ladies is always better than a good day working.

Now that I am retired, I feel every day is a Holiday and every night is a Saturday night.

Sometimes I sort of envy the young dancers coming along but when I realize I was there during the heyday of our dance, I then believe they should envy me.

When my time comes, I hope Shad, Steve Rouse and those who have gone before will save me a little space on the dance floor of that great Juke Joint in the sky.