



Moncille Thomas 2010

MONCILLE THOMAS

I was born in Ft. Bragg, N.C. in 1955 but grew up in Goldsboro, N.C. My earliest recollections of the "Shag", as we know it today, was one of dancing in my mother's arms as she swayed to the sounds of Dinah Washington, Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald or Nat King Cole and also of watching my mother and father dancing, either on the living room floor or in the little taverns of Carolina Beach, N.C. My mother, Audrey Vinson Vaglianti was from Goldsboro and in her youth had danced the floors of the Atlantic Beach, N.C. Pavilion, Goldpark Lake, and other local dance venues. She loved this dance and the music, so she taught me, from the time I could stand on my own, how to do the basic, a pivot and a belly roll, so we could dance together...and dance together we did...many a day, many a night...on that same living room floor. As I grew into my teenage years, we would go to Atlantic Beach and there I would watch those dancing at the Pavilion, walk around the "circle" with my childhood friends, Terry, Debbie, and Margo, and listen to the sound coming from the Embers Club or the infamous Jolly Knave. Margo and I would go to the Teen Club and the Armory in Goldsboro to hear the bands and dance as much as we could, we always loved the music.

I was 16 when I first stepped into the Jolly Knave in Atlantic Beach and from that moment on...my life was never quite the same. There I watched the dancers...Susan & Ronnie, Barbara & Bobby, Bones, Danny Bean, Milton.... It was because of that experience, I began an attempt to refine my own dancing steps and style. I attended East Carolina University and would go to the Knave at the beach, Reds (Kinston) or the Embers Club (Raleigh) on weekends...loving every second of it! As time moved on...I left North Carolina, returning home occasionally and going to local dance joints such as A Quiet Place or Reds. When I moved to Georgia...I married and eventually moved to Charleston, S.C. where my son, Dylan Taylor was born. In Charleston, I renewed my love of the dance and met wonderful friends...Andy and Sherrie, Gail and Claude, Leslie, Mary, Roger and Peggy, Angie and Geno, just to name a few. Becoming single again, I began my dancing odyssey in North Myrtle Beach, attending SOS along with other events...rekindling my friendship with two very important mentors, Charles Gurley and Milton Nowell, Jr. Through Charles' wealth of knowledge about the music and the dance and through my personal and very old friendship with Milton, North Myrtle Beach became my second home. It was at the clubs of North Myrtle Beach that I also formulated lasting friendships...Sandra Schwartz, Buzz and Dana, ML and Bob, Jeannie and Billy, those from "the NEST" (and you know who you are), Eddie and Kathryn, Sidney and Kathy, Bill and Kay, "my girls", Vicki, Annie, Mick, Marie, Agnes, Judy, Kay, Marianne, my "Greensboro crew", and so many others, they all know how much I love them. I have had the pleasure of dancing with some wonderful dancers through the years...JoJo, Ernie, Mike, Jimmy, Bill, Sam...far too many to even attempt to mention...I've watched some great female dancers along the way...Lynda Carole, Stick, Jeannie, and Sandra, what great and unique styles on the floor! I can't go without mentioning the younger dancers whom I have watched "grow up" and who have helped to keep this dance alive; "little" David, George, Chris, Matt, Willie "G" and Grayson.

I have always admired and respected many of the dancers that I've watched these many years...Chicken, Louise, Dewey, Bunk, Billy "Packman", Harry, Bobby...They are all gone now but it is through them that the dance carries on...Though all of those younger dancers out there now, we can still watch many of the other "greats" as they carry their own style and steps onto the dance floors and as we watch let's not forget their legacy.

Lastly and most importantly, to my mom, Audrey...she left me just before this great honor was bestowed upon me. I give her all the love and admiration one can have...it is she who enabled me to be inducted into the Shaggers Hall of Fame. She instilled in me an eternal love of this music and of this dance...her legacy.