



# Jack Armstrong 1985

## JACK ARMSTRONG

I grew up in Raleigh, NC in the early forties. As soon as I was old enough I headed for White Lake, at the time that was where the action was because of the blackouts at the beach. I spent a couple of summers there, driving a speed boat off of Crystal Pier, hopping passengers for a ride around the lake at fifty cents a head. That's when I first met Dick Webb, who was doing the same thing, (he got me the job), and sort of took me under his wing. Most of my free time and nights were spent at the Hay Loft or one of the other jump joints, watching people like Dick, Tookie Lee, Clarice Reavis, Frank Horner and Jinks Barfield just to name a few dance and do their thing. After watching them for half a summer, I finally picked up a few steps and started dancing myself. It sort of rubbed off on you and I've been dancing ever since.

In the winter months, big bands such as Stan Kenton, Charlie Spivak, Tommy Dorsey, Louis Jordan, and Gene Krupa used to come to Raleigh and play for dances at Memorial Auditorium. It was during this time that I met friends like Betty Kirkpatrick, Jean Allen, Harry Driver, Chicken Hicks, Chick Hedrick, Harry Oliver and the list goes on and on. We used to pick up steps from one another and incorporate them into our own style of dancing and in time, all of us had such a repertoire of steps that we could be versatile and not do the same old thing every time we danced.

When the blackouts were lifted on the coast, everyone started going to Carolina Beach and I spent the next two summers there, dancing to the music of Jimmy Cavallo at Bop City, the Old Lumina at Wrightsville Beach and all the other jump joints on the beach. I finally ended up at Myrtle Beach working at the old, wooden pavilion. Back in those days the most popular places to dance were the Jitterbug Shack beside the Pavilion and Spivey's Beach, and on Sundays everyone migrated to Ocean Drive Pavilion, or the Pad, because you could buy beer there on Sunday. Good dancers on the beach then were Big George Lineberry, Betty Kirkpatrick Catron, Leon Williams, Billy Williams, Bud Hunt, Harry Driver, Weezy Rogers, Little Red Dixon, Jimmy Calcutt, Lamar Johnson, Jean Allen Ferguson, Fiddle Fidel and a multitude of others that space will not permit naming.

I left the beach in the early or middle fifties, did a stint in the service, got married and settled down to try to make something of my life, and was out of touch with the beach scene except on weekends for about twenty-five years. Until (you guessed it) the first S.O.S.

Since the first S.O.S. I have renewed a lot of old friendships and made a lot of new, and I hope lasting ones, but the thing that pleases me most is to see very young people learning and showing a big interest in the Shag. That means that the dance will be around for a long, long time. I hope that they have as much fun with it as we older ones are having and have had, and hope that I'll be around to see it all happen. Viva La Shag!!!