



## Joan Mabry Owen 1984 (Little Doc)

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It's hard for me to say how long I've been "on the beach" since I came from Charlotte every summer as a child with the family. I guess it was the summer of '48 when it really hit me hard. It was my first houseparty and we stayed at Ocean Drive. Eight girls and two chaperones! It was the "proper" thing to do in those days. Everyone was peroxidizing their hair. The guys all began to look alike with the blond duck tails and peg pants. They wouldn't be caught dead with a shirt on under their V-neck cashmere sweaters and a pair of socks with their loafers was unheard of! The gals would fry in the sun all day and all looked like pink bunnies in their angora sweaters, short shorts and ballet shoes at night. But we had "arrived" and we knew it!

We danced every night till the wee hours of the morning - wearing out the ol' ballet shoes in a week's time. We used to dance at the old pavilion at Myrtle Beach bumming dimes off the "old folks" for the juke box. After all, why should we pay and put on an exhibition too? Only "tourists" paid the tab. Around eleven, we would all migrate to Spiveys - a little wooden shack of a place right on the beach, but to us it was beautiful. Good place to dance, drink a little beer (not much in those days - we were all on a natural high) and then for a while a small group would end up at a little house named "Blueberry Hill". Sprawling in chairs, across beds, sitting on the floor listening to some mellow jazz - Charlie "The Bird" Parker, Ella or maybe the Devine Sarah to name a few. On Sunday nights it was to get to O.D., each man for himself, but we'd get there one way or the other. That was the longest, darkest 13 miles from 9th Avenue up to O.D. No such thing as "Restaurant Row" in those days.

Most of the guys I associated with worked those summers at the pavilion, in bingo parlors, renting floats on the beach or life guarding (some of 'em couldn't save their own life much less mine!). Then there were those that routinely bummed off a different houseparty of girls each week. Anything to hang on till Labor Day.

There were the greats and the not so greats, but all fun loving people - the nicknames of some sounded like Rogues Gallery. Snake, Creeper, Buster, Leaky, Boxcar, Sleepy, Arab, Boney, Greasy, Bird Dog, Swink, Shorty, etc. Horse Wilson told me I had legs like Doc Blanchard thus, I was dubbed "Little Doc".

At that time, the friendships began - we never realized at our early age how deep a friendship can last. Even though the "Shag" has been around a long time (it was called "fas' dancin' then) there will never be another group of people that loved to dance for the sheer enjoyment of it, a closer bunch that loved each other so much, than the folks so endearingly calling themselves the "before Hazel group".

"Those were the days my friend, I thought they'd never end" but one given day in a matter of hours the beautiful way of life was devastated by Hazel. From that moment on, it was the end of an era that will never be the same, no matter how many "beach bums" come and go . . . it was a special time of life.