



# M.R. "Chicken" Hicks 1984

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On Thanksgiving Day, several years ago I was born in the town of Durham, NC. I always liked music, but never danced any until I was around 14 years old. At that time a couple of older girls who lived across the street from me started teaching me some steps. They taught me the basic step with the same timing as we know it today. The difference in the basic then and now, is that we danced side by side with our arm around the girls waist, holding her by the hand, dancing to what I call a "Rockin Chair" basic.

When I was about 15 or 16, an older guy who was a pretty good dancer and a friend of my fathers took me to Myrtle Beach. This was my first exposure to dancing at the beach, and I knew right away that this was for me.

During the forties the Big Black Swing Bands were playing at the Durham Armory, at least twice a month and if at all possible I was always there. As I attended these dances I started to watch the black dancers and began to copy their style of dancing. I became friends with two of the best black dancers I have ever seen. These two guys taught me the "Shortie George" - "Camel Walk" and the "Sand". Automatically I picked up on what todays dancers call the "Pivot" which was the blacks basic step at that time.

In March 1943 Big George Lineberry, Junior Nicholson and myself hitch hiked to Myrtle without a dime between us. I almost starved before the season started and the girls started coming down . . . their house parties were a good source of food! We hung out at the "Old Wooden Pavilion", at the same location of the present one. It was about the only place available for dancing.

In mid-summer that year I left and came to Carolina Beach . . . and that was where it was really happening. It was just like a state fair 24 hours a day, you could just about dance round the clock. There were eight "Jump Joints", which were places with nothing but a Juke Box and Dance Floor, with free admission, open air and "ocean front". There were two other places "Ocean Plaza Ball Room" and "Bop City", both were upstairs and well known for the bands they had. With all of this, what more would you want . . . I could see I had found a home! When I left one Jump Joint and a its R & B faded out, you could hear the R & B coming from the next one just down the way. This would make me so high I felt like I would explode . . . I've never had a feeling like that since.

Shortly after I came to Carolina Beach I got to know two guys that changed the records on the Juke Boxes in the Jump Joints. The three of us would get a bottle and go over to a nearby black beach called "Seabreeze". This beach had "Piccolo" houses (Bootleg joints) and there I could pick out R & B records that I liked, bring them out of the black beach to Carolina Beach and these guys would put them on the Juke Boxes for me. The sounds would send you "RAGING" to find a dance floor!

Basically I patterned my style of dancing after the blacks, picking up their steps while dancing in the "Piccolo" houses and enjoying "every step" along the way!!