



# Berkley (Berk) B. Altman 1996

## BERKLEY (BERK) B. ALTMAN (Last of the Free Dancers)

In the early 1940's in Mullins, SC, Jimmy Gordon, Herb Martin, Gene English, Clayton Baxley, Turk Petros, Lennie Wiggins and me would fast dance at Tobacco Festivals, Butch's, The P.D. Lodge and the Teen Club. The wearing of taylor mades (drapes) and conk hair styles (duck tails) were in among the cool cats. These were the founders.

Thumbing to Myrtle Beach in 1943 and 1944 , I worked at a restaurant on the Boardwalk and danced at the Pavilion, the Ocean Forest Hotel, and later at Spivey's. Big George was King at Myrtle Beach, and we stayed at the Myrtle Lodge. Look out for your drapes!!!

In 1945 and 1946 I ran the Cherry Grove Pavilion, and started working to get dancers to move from Myrtle Beach to O.D. and Cherry Grove where I lived all summer each year.

In 1947 David Pope had Pope's Place at O.D. and Sonny Nixon had Sonny's Pavilion at Cherry Gorge. We danced there and at the O.D. Pavilion.

In 1947 to 1950 you would see the likes of Harry Driver, Bert Bennett, Leon Williams, Arab, Turk, Belton Stevens, Jimmy Calcutt, Hoot Owl, Franz Johnson, Lacy Moore, Vera Munn, Jean Allen, Charlie Lookabill, Bobby Rainwater and the Treadways. All danced or worked at O.D. and we all knew Ira and Billy.

I worked at Sonny's in the late 40's with Walter Windley, and soon it was the place to go. Give Sonny Nixon and David Pope credit for getting dancers from Mullins, Darlington, Hartsville, Florence, Sumter, Columbia, Charlotte, Greensboro and Statesville to our beach. You would see Lila and Doodle, Vera, David, Barbara and Larry Blake dancing at Sonny's.

In 1953 I moved to Gastonia and in 1957 married the best fast dancer in town, Faye Bradley. She is still among the 5 best girl dancers around. Brenda Alberty nominated her for the Hall of Fame in 1990. We are both in the Living Legends.

We moved to Charlotte in 1960, and we would dance at the Steak & Ale and Groucho's. We met good dancers there like: Shad & Brenda, Joann, Randy, Bill Young, Babs, Buzz, Wanda & Norman, Mike Campbell, Sam & Sandra. At the clubs and at the beach we would see Jimmy & Betty Reaves, Judy Duke, Charlie & Jackie, Jeannie & Billy Pack and of course the old timers like Chick, Buck, Chicken, Fleet and Harold.

For 53 years I have loved the dance, the music and the people, and will continue to associate myself with them.

My wife and I have been married for 39 years and believe if you dance and golf together, you will stay together.