



Barbara Kannan 2006

BARBARA KANNAN

Was there ever a house in your neighborhood where all of the kids loved to gather? Well, that was my house in Goldsboro, NC. Not because it was a really nice house nor had the best after school snacks; but because both of my parents would leave for work every day before 4 PM and the "hallway" would become a dance floor! There were three teenage girls that lived across the street and sometimes they would baby sit my brothers and sisters and me for my parents. They would come over to work, parents would leave, phone calls would be made, and the party would begin! Being the typical 10 year old girl, I did not want to be left out of the group, so I convinced them to teach me how to "bop". Also being the typical 10 year old girl, NO One would dance with me. So I danced with the door knob, and watched, and watched, and danced, and danced. Even after the kids would leave, I would go in my bedroom and dance with the door knob or the bed post, and practice what I had been taught or what I had seen the "good" dancers do. I did this over and over for hour upon hour sometimes making up stuff that I thought would work or would look good enough to get me noticed by the teenagers!

During this time and for the next few years, the parents would be off on Sundays, and would occasionally plan day trips to Atlantic Beach. Boy, would I be excited! We would leave Goldsboro at 5 AM so that we could make a full day of the beach. Arriving at around 7 or 7:30 AM, I would plant myself on the steps of the AB Pavilion waiting for it to open so that I could watch the dancers and maybe even talk someone into dancing with me. Wouldn't even bring a bathing suit with me! Who wanted sun ... not me! All I wanted was to dance. One particular Sunday, a young man was in the Pavilion and he asked me to dance. I had seen him stepping and twirling all afternoon and was so shocked that he would ask this skinny little girl to dance. Of course I thought I had to do every single step I knew during that one song. After the song was over, the guy told me that he thought I was a pretty good dancer, but that I didn't need to do steps; I needed to learn my basic inside and out; backwards and forwards and that if I would do that, I would be able to dance with anyone, anywhere. That young man was Doug Perry. I took what he told me very seriously and never forgot it. And, he was right! The steps were fun but they were not important. They would come later.

Fast forwarding, I was fortunate enough to have danced competitively for a few years where not only did I get to see the best of the best, but I got to dance with them. Buzz Sawyer, Eddie Page, Mike Pace, Jeppy McDowell, Danny Bean, Bobby Griffin, Norfleet Jones, Charles Gurley, Ronnie Duggins, Milton Nowell, Ronnie Stone, John Teel, Cecil Squires, the list goes on and on. And what about the girls? There were some of the greatest female dancers around: Susan Jarrett Neal, Vee Page, Brenda Pace, O'Neal Branch Bourne, Linda Cooke, Kate Griffin, Debbie Bradshaw, Pee Wee Teel, Linda Squires, Judy Eastwood, and this list too goes on and on. During those days, the contests were fun. Not a lot of practicing, but a lot of fun. I had to honor to win the ultimate contest held the first weekend in August at the Jolly Knaves in 1978. Won a few others; lost a few too. But had a lot of fun and made a lot of memories at all of them.

Always remember: live each day as if it were your last; love as if you have never loved before; and dance as if no one were watching. Live it, love it, share it, dance it!