



Frances Hyman Nichols 1986

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Francis Hyman, born to Baptist parents in Columbia, SC, loved to dance at the early age of eleven. Living in the outskirts of town and having no sidewalks for skates, etc. we only had the radio for music and entertainment. I remember dancing many a summer day on my front porch with friends or maybe the brick post.

I attended Eau Claire High School from the 7th through the 12th grades. We had a coke machine and music in the canteen and were allowed to dance during lunch break. Being a lowly 7th grader, I watched the upper classmen dance in awe - knowing right away I wanted to dance, dress and flirt like they did. Having gone to a very small grammar school, playing baseball had been my love . . . until now! So - a young girl grows up.

Having a friend and one time sweetheart, Billy Moffat, I learned to shag or "fast dance" earlier than most. His parents had a beach house at Ocean Drive and he spent summers there learning the beach shag. I remember watching him dance for the first time after one of those summers and I knew I wanted to dance his way. The Pivot was the hardest for me, but he was a master at it and would not quit until I felt the beat. The Pivot, Sugar Foot and Boogie Walk were the only steps we put a name to in those days.

June, 1954. My first trip to the coast without parents in tow. OH! House Party Days! The Myrtle Beach Pavilion, the Rec, Spivey's and OD were where I wanted to be. Now starts a time in my life of meeting very interesting people - "Worry" Smith, Charlie Porter, Joe Mullins, Sonny Small, "Sleepy" Timmerman, "Swamp Rabbit," Larry Blake, Dennis Beam, Jo Jo Putnam and many others I can not put a name to, only a dance step. I watched and learned.

Back to Columbia for my Senior year. Bill and Jonnie Lou Wingate had moved to town. What great dancers! People like Billy and Jeanne Pack, "Creper" Montgomery, Jimmy Starnes, Talmage Joyner, Jack Neely, etc. were around Columbia and did we dance! Silver Lake and the Township Auditorium - to see all the great black entertainers. We danced in the isles, never on the dance floor. My daddy NEVER knew about those days.

New Years Eve, 1954. Married "Worry" Smith, finished High School and moved to York, SC as a young wife. But the beach was against me then. "Worry" could not stay away and our marriage lasted only two years. During those two years, I met many "Jitterbugs" as some called them in those days - especially my Daddy - "One Lung" Blackwell, David and Richard Michaels, Maurice and Ronnie Treadway, Fred Collins, Harold Martin, David Smith, Don Edwards, Shad and Rufus Wactor to name a few.

1957 - 1959. Two more years of fun! Dancing at the Pad, Cherry Grove Pavilion, The Black Cat and Windy Hill, when everything else was crowded.

1959. Marriage again. To a fine guy, Jack Nichols and 23 years of raising two beautiful children, Lisa and Todd. We went to the beach for several years, then the drought. So seldom a familiar face. If not for having a husband who danced, golf beach trips, parties in my garage, the Columbia Quarter Club and still seeing people like Tommy White, Jimmy Mills, Mike Harkey and Mike Osborne, the shag would have been lost to me.

September 1980 - S.O.S. - HEAVEN. Renewing old friendships and developing new ones. Never did I expect it to start over again, old beach times. And what fun! Five years of it.

To be selected from among so many greats, I am honored to become a member of the Beach Shaggers Hall of Fame. Thanks to all of you.