



Janet Lawrence Morris 1989

JANET LAWRENCE MORRIS

The beach and dancing came into my life at an early age, starting with the Shore in N.J., and discovering the N.C. and S.C. beaches soon after my family moved to Charlotte. Even then, at about age 12, I would rather watch the "fast dancers" than do the usual arcade and rides, etc. Soon my feet wanted to imitate what I had seen, and a doorknob became my dance partner. Still too shy to get out on a dance floor, I loved every trip to the beaches . . . at first Wrightsville, Carolina, Windy Hill and Myrtle. Who got me out on that dance floor? One of my Central High buddies, Charlie Lookabill . . . (every other dancer must have been unavailable!). It was at Myrtle, at the old pavilion, and I can remember being surprised that my feet knew what to do!

Looking back, most people knew me from the early days of the late 40's and early 50's at Myrtle . . . life long friends were made there, and later, at Ocean Drive and Cherry Grove. Some time later on, the family would buy a beach house at Crescent Beach, and from then on, you could find me at N. Myrtle.

I worked at Myrtle the summers of 1949 through 1951, at the Two Minute Grill and the 8th Ave. Grill, close to the new pavilion. When I wasn't working, I was always near the dance floor and those crazy, unique, laugh-loving personalities that shared a love for the beach and our "own personal" dance. I remember so many names that its impossible to include on this page . . . (Joan Mabry Owen calls me a beach historian).

What do I remember? well, for a short time, the old wood pavilion and boardwalk at M.B., and afterwards, when the new pavilion was built, around 1950. For awhile, the tourists played the jukebox and we danced, but "our place" was Spivey's, just south of M.B., along with trips to the "Rec", Robert's Pavilion at O.D., and Sonny's at Cherry Grove. Then along came Hurricane Hazel in 1954, the "Pad" was born, and time marched on. I finished school, moved to Chapel Hill, married Jerry Morris in 1958, and moved several times, to Silver Spring, Md., Ocean View, Va., St. Louis, Mo., to the NYC area, in N.J., and finally back to Charlotte in 1966. During that time we added Lane, Bill, Jeri and Rob to the Morris family, so the 60's were sort of a blur; we did get to the beach, and we did get "sand in our shoes", but it was literal, as from a child's sand pail! Need I say more?

When I emerged from motherhood and rediscovered my feet, "fast dancing" had somehow been renamed the "shag" . . . but the music was there, the great good feelings were there, and some of the best people in this world had found the beach and the good times again.

What am I doing now? As I have all along, my work is in Maternal-Child Nursing and since I teach Nursing, had to go back to school a while; so while my first alma mater was in Richmond, Va. (MCV), I am proud to be an alum of USC, Columbia. That, of course, was work, and I earned every inch of it; but dancing . . . that's pure love, and to be recognized by the "cream of the crop" for simply being me on the dance floor, holds a very special meaning to me, because of who it comes from!