Lake Lure Shag Rag

Volume 1 | Newsletter for the Lake Lure Shag Club | January 2009

Our Mission Statement

The purpose of the Lake Lure Shag Club is to preserve, encourage and promote shag dancing and to strive to perpetuate the dance, music and culture that make up the shag.

2008 Officers

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Move Over Dirty Dancing...
...Shag is Coming To Lake Lure!

By: Dot Jarrett

It's hard to believe that just a few short years ago a group of local residents gathered to discuss the formation of a shag club for the Lake Lure area. Some of you may remember the posters which were put up in various places throughout the Hickory Nut Gorge with this picture of Lake Lure's sweethearts - Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey.

Our hopes to gain interested parties who might want to become a part of a local dance club materialized and here we are today. Because of the history of dance activity in the area, it felt only natural to want to keep that energy alive by tapping into the phenomenon of shag dancing and the popularity of the music and the culture surrounding it.

Many of the local residents in the Hickory Nut Gorge moved here from locations where shag dancing had always been a part of their lives and welcomed the opportunity to keep that part of their past alive. The name Lake Lure Shag Club was chosen for the organization and "Lake Lure Shag Rag" was the name chosen for the club's newsletter. Up until now, our news updates have been done by e-mail, but we have decided to publish a hard copy for circulation and it will also be distributed by e-mail. If you would like to be a part of our distribution list, please let us know.

Although we have some experienced dancers in our group, most of the members of our club have had to learn shag dancing from the beginning steps. Our best dances have been the ones we have shared with the area shag clubs who come to visit and entertain us with their great dancing techniques. We continue to grow and improve and welcome new members at any time. All local dance events are open to the general public with a minimal cover charge.

If you are not familiar with the dance, lessons can be arranged. We are currently organizing a dance class, so if you are interested, please give me a call. You do not have to bring a partner to dance lessons and the basic steps are easy to learn.

There are many fond memories to share and new ones to be made. Come share the good times and be greeted by the smiling faces of neighbors and friends you've never met. We are happy to share the hospitality and beauty of the Lake Lure, Chimney Rock and Hickory Nut Gorge areas and I definitely want to see you on the dance floor!

Proper dance shoes can have you dirty dancing or shagging your best in no time. A flat shoe with a leather sole is best. Check out these websites for good footwear: www.judyshouseofoldies.com
www.shagshoes.com or www.misterdon.com

Finding a Place to Call "Home"

By: Sandra Rhodes

The biggest problem every shag club faces is acquiring a suitable place to dance. Several things come into play such as the size of the room to accommodate a large group, the need for a good dance floor, and the types of beverages which the establishment is licensed to sell.

The owners of the Inn, George and Hope Wittmer, graciously offered the Lake Lure Shag Club the use of the Roosevelt Hall, a building located behind the Inn to hold their monthly dances. When visiting our dances, be sure to ask about any discounts on room rates being offered by the Inn.

The club has designated the second saturday of each month for dances. Due to special events and weddings hosted by the Inn, these dates and the location are subject to change.

At the present time, our new website is under construction and will be up and running soon. If you haven't received a notice about our monthly dance, please send me an email and I will give you an update. The club will also consider offers from other establishments who would like to provide an area with a suitable dance floor for an event. The area needed should be able to hold approxiately 50-125 people or more.

We will also accommodate requests for information on available DJ's and information on providing shag dance lessons for other local events.

1927 Lake Lure Inn & Spa

"DANCE LIKE NO ONE IS WATCHING"

Some interesting information from the Inn's website:

The 1927 Lake Lure Inn and Spa is one of the original North Carolina landmarks, built when Lake Lure was first developed. In 2005, the Inn enjoyed a full restoration to its historic splendor, and now features an outstanding collection of period art and antiques, duplicating the aesthetic experiences grand hotels of the 1920's provided.

The 1927 Lake Lure Inn and Spa is located at 2771 Memorial Highway in Lake Lure, N. C. across from the beach. Over the years, the historic Inn has hosted a diverse range of celebrities, from F. Scott Fitzgerald, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Emily Post, Calvin Coolidge, and Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey during the filming of "Dirty Dancing". For more information about the historic Inn and their services, please visit their website at www.lakelure.com.

... A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT ...

By: David Efird

The Lake Lure Shag Club would like to extend a very special thank you to the following local businesses who have donated items for door prizes, offered us a place to dance, or given monetary contributions to the club since its beginning: George and Hope Wittmer - owners of The 1927 Lake Lure Inn and Spa and staff, Bill Crowley (Quick Gold Foils), Mountains Branch Library, Mountain 1st Bank, BB&T, Wachovia, Bubba O'Leary's, Chimney Rock Park, Lakesedge Realty, Bald Mountain Realty, Rumbling Bald Resort, Carolina Cars & Clubs, Lake Lure Boat Tours, Milt Bullard, Bud Tanner, David Efird, Mike Sechriest, Tracy Green, Dot Jarrett, and local residents who have attended our events.

We would also like to thank those persons outside of the local area who have donated items for door prizes, given monetary contributions, taught us how to dance, and contributed your time and counsel: Steve and Kathy Day of Boiling Springs, S. C., Mike and Beth McDaniel and Sam Lail of Shelby, N. C., Judie Walters of Charlotte, N. C., and Johnny Barker and Patsy Fuller of the Dallas and Gaston County area of N. C. Please add to that list the following people: 'Fessa' John Hook, DJ (www.beachshag.com), David Shaw - owner of Duck's and Duck's, Too, H. Lee Brown - owner of The Pavillion and Sunset Grill, and Sandra Swartz Adams (and husband, Dennis Adams) and the Carolina Beach Music Awards (www.cammy.org), all from North Myrtle Beach, S. C.

"Nobody puts Baby in a corner"

2006 Olympiad Winners: Keith Davis, Karen Worlonas, Garrett Humphries, Loretta O'Donald, Jan McCallister, Johnny McCraw

We would also like to thank all the other shag club members who have attended our events. We are very grateful for your contributions and continued support. YOU HAVE BROUGHT US OUT OF OUR CORNER, AND WE ARE HAVING THE TIME OF OUR LIVES!

Remembering the El Tango

By: Rocky Phillips

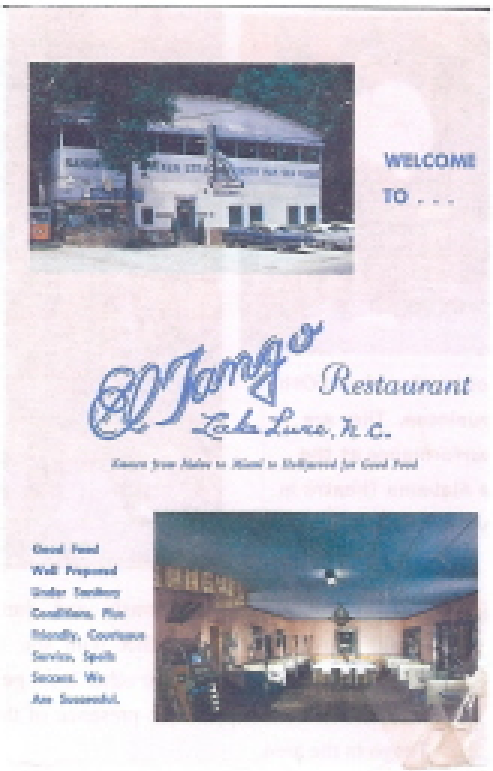
The El Tango was the dream of an American serviceman returning from World War II. As he passed through Lake Lure, Lawrence Reed Phillips, my father, found what he was looking for.....opportunity.

Larry was a Latin dance instructor originally from Ohio. But like so many others who have discovered Lake Lure, he wanted to stay and make this beautiful place his home. He met Thelma Green of the Sunnyview Community in nearby Polk County, and they married in 1948 and settled in Lake Lure.

The name "El Tango" was chosen because of Larry's Latin dance background. It began as a small sandwich stand and ice cream bar with a short order menu. It soon became a big attraction for servicemen passing through, as well as local residents and tourists.

This would set the stage for the progress to come. With the help of his brother, Larry Phillips began to build and expand the business and in 1948, the restaurant dining room opened.

Locally, the business continued to grow and prosper. On the national scene, the post war years brought about the popularity of the big bands in the 1940's. Because of this, there was a growing population of people seeking a good, clean nightlife. In 1951, Thelma and Larry Phillips opened a night club on the second floor of the building. The early 1950's ushered in the era of Rock 'n' Roll and the El Tango became known for the artists and entertainers who made their way to a little town called Lake Lure in Western North



The cover of the original menu from the El Tango Restaurant (Circa 1948 - 1978) Highway 64/74 - Lake Lure, N. C.

Carolina. They promoted their music by travelling on what became known as the "Motown" buses.

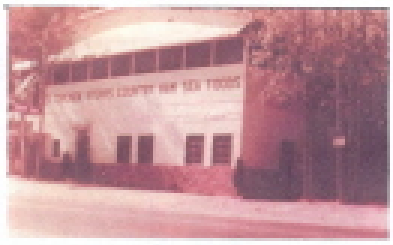
It didn't seem to matter that Rutherford County was a dry county because the buses kept rolling into Lake Lure. The draw was the entertainment and being able to spend time with friends and visitors. It is very much like the environment with the shag clubs.

I have been involved with shag music and dancing my entire life and the most amazing thing is that I have already heard the music live that so many people refer to as "beach and shag" music today and can only enjoy in a recorded form.

The first band to play here was Charlie Speedback and his orchestra from Spartanburg, S. C. Some of the other artists who performed here were: The bands of Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey, Bo Didley, Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, The Platters, The Four Tops, Little Anthony and The Imperials, Dr. Feelgood and The Interns, Doug Clark and The Hot Nuts, The Shirelles, and The Supremes and others.

A lot of the shag music we enjoy today was first performed here at the El Tango by Maurice Williams and The Zodiacs, The Embers, James Brown, The Delmonicos, Clifford Curry, and The Tams (both the Atlanta group and the original Tams from Brevard, N. C.)

The "Motown" buses kept rolling into Lake Lure all through the 50's and 60's. One of my Mom's favorite stories is about Ronnie Milsap. As a struggling artist, he asked to use the El Tango as a place to practice his music because he had no other place to go. Ronnie Milsap started out playing what was considered rock and roll music, but later switched to a more country sound which eventually led to his becoming a superstar.

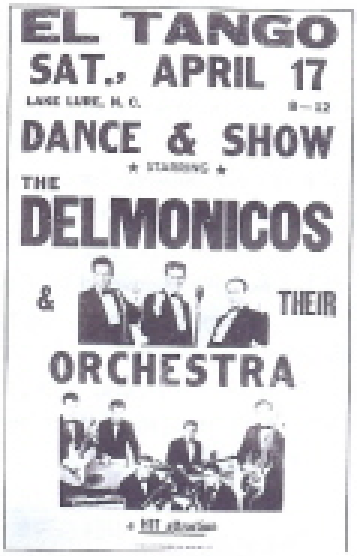


At a young age, I was able to see and dance with the music that defined a whole generation. People came from neighboring towns and states to enjoy the best in music and a fine dinner. They were the "Happy Days" of my youth.

I enjoy seeing my children's reactions when I hear the old songs on the radio and say "I remember that song". And then I proceed to tell them about being there when and where it all happened. They find it very hard to believe. (continued on page 4.)

Remembering the El Tango (continued from page 3)

Little Anthony & The Imperials are celebrating their 50th year in the music entertainment business. They are pictured here during their recent performance at the Carolina Beach Music Awards at the Alabama Theatre in November of 2008 in North Myrtle Beach, SC.



When the soundtrack for the movie "Dirty Dancing" was released, Maurice Williams and The Zodiacs enjoyed a second wave of fame. Two of the most popular shag songs over the years can be found on the soundtrack of the movie: "Cry To Me" by Solomon Burke and "Stay" by Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs.

Maurice Williams & The Zodiacs (pictured in October, 2007) are also currently celebrating 50 years in the music and entertainment business.

Back then, the music and dancing would cause a lot of conflict with the local religious leaders. There were other local people who also did not support the presence of the El Tango in the area.

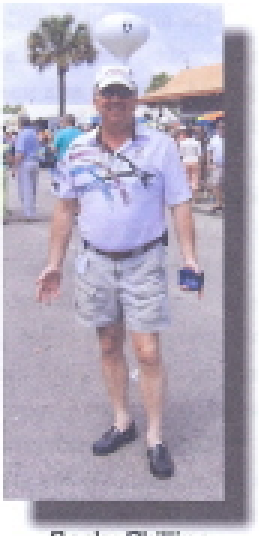
In 1978, the El Tango was burned by an arsonist. My parents did not have insurance on the building and lost everything. A piece of local history was lost that can never be replaced. After the fire, they opened a convenience store and gas station known locally as "Thelma's Mountain Store". A couple of years ago, my mom sold the business, but the original building still stands.

I make my home in Charlotte, and I am a past Vice-President of the Lake Wylie Shag Club and now a member of the Lake Lure Shag Club. If you're in Charlotte, come by Lynn's and we will share a dance or two.

DANCE LESSONS

We are currently organizing a new dance class. If you are interested in taking shag dance lessons, please call: Sandra Rhodes at 828-429-5216, Dot Jarrett at 828-625-1699 or 828-289-0710, or Tracy Green at 828-980-5700 for more information. Thanks.

The performers were booked by Ted Hall's HIT Attractions out of Charlotte, N. C. The poster above advertises the Delmonicos, who appeared here in April of 1965.



Rocky Phillips

I attended the first "SOS" at North Myrtle Beach, S. C. and continue to follow the music and dance of my youth during the "Spring Safari" and "Fall Migration" every year at the beach. You can usually find me at Fat Harold's Beach Club or at Duck's and Duck's, Too or the Pavillion. I hope to see you there sometime.

THE FILMING OF "DIRTY DANCING" IN LAKE LURE, NC

Original site of the filming of the movie "Dirty Dancing"

In 1987, a little low-budget movie got the world on its feet and became a romantic classic. Though it was supposed to take place in the Catskills, the movie was filmed in Lake Lure, N. C. and in Virginia.

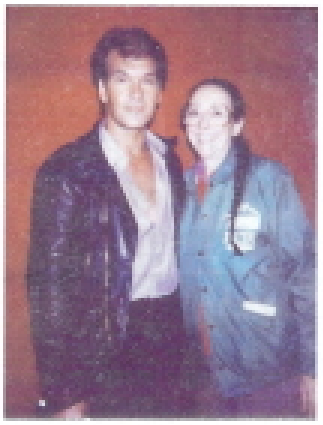
The lake and interior scenes (which account for about 90% of the filming) were shot in Lake Lure. Most of the building shots are of the Mountain Lake Hotel in Pembroke, Virginia. "Johnny's" cabin and the other buildings used in the movie in Lake Lure no longer exist, and were located off of Boys Camp Road. That area has become a newly constructed development called "Firefly Cove".

"Dirty Dancing " Revues were held there in the original structure until that building was destroyed by fire. Part of the rock foundation still exists and has become a private homesite. The hotel in Virginia is still open and hosts Dirty Dancing themed weekend events regularly.

Another scene from the movie was filmed on the 16th green of the Bald Mountain Golf Course located off of Bee Tree Point at Rumbling Bald Resort in Lake Lure.

A Loving Tribute To "Mama Tango"

Thelma Estelle Phillips, 80 of Lake Lure, N. C. passed away on November 24, 2008. Mrs. Phillips was the owner and operator of the El Tango Restaurant from 1948 to 1978 and later Thelma's Mountain Store in Lake Lure. She was affectionately known as "Mama Tango". She was active in many local organizations and will be sadly missed by one and all.



Patrick Swayze & Thelma Phillips during the filming of "Dirty Dancing", which was released in August, 1987.

Shag Dancing Is Enjoyed Year Round and Shared By All Age Groups

Membership in the Junior Shag Association is open to anyone under 21 years of age. The juniors will have an opportunity to compete in dance contests January 15-18 in N. Myrtle Beach, S. C. for scholarships during SOS Mid-Winter events. Junior SOS is held in July every year and hosted by participating lounges. For more information on the JSA, please visit www.juniorshaggers.com.

Junior Shaggers from Gaffney, SC performed in Lake Lure in October, 2008. Pictured left to right are Kolten Ellis (9), Kalin Ellis (15), Bradly Ellis (17) and Eva Wellmon (8)

The National Shag Team Performed at the Carolina Beach Music Awards at the Alabama Theatre , North Myrtle Beach, S.C. in November, 2008

The Association of Carolina Shag Clubs (ACSC) was founded in 1984 and is comprised of approximately 100 organized clubs situated along the Eastern and Southern coastal areas of the United States from Maryland to Miami and inland to Kentucky, Tennessee and other states. There is a constantly growing interest in the phenomenon known as shag dancing.

Shag events stimulate the economy in the towns where the local shag clubs are supported. Beach music events are featured on a regular basis throughout the Carolinas with very good attendance. For more information on the ACSC and its member clubs, please visit www.shagdance.com.

Shaggers from areas along the entire East Coast gather at N. Myrtle Beach, S. C. to dance in the the New Year at Duck's on December 31, 2008. Shag Dancing is offered at all the establishments along Ocean Drive and they sell out early for the festivities.

Lake Lure Shag Club
P. O. Box 111
Lake Lure, NC 28746

The Lake Lure Shag Rag is being widely distributed throughout the Carolinas and to all areas of the East Coast to 100+ organized shag clubs and their supporters via hard copy and e-mail. If you would like to advertise in this newsletter for a minimal monthly fee, please contact us. Thanks.

Mail To:

For Beach and Shag Music, Tune Into:

'Feeaa John Hook at www.beachshag.com for great music and news of the shag world
Beach Bob with Kathy Cole at 103.3 from 2:00-6:00 pm or www.beachboboldies.com
Check out www.grandstrandradionetwork.com and you can get 94.9, The Surf at www.949thesurf.com
Carolina Shag Dance Show (Mike McDaniel) on Mondays from 9-11 pm at 88.3 FM or www.wgwg.org
On Fridays and Saturdays go to 91.7 FM or www.wsgs.org to hear a variety of popular shag DJ's.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MID-WINTER SOS

DATES: JANUARY 15-18, 2009
LOCATION; OCEAN DRIVE IN
NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, SC

Don't forget that you need a current SOS membership card to open the doors of the SOS lounges. Cards are $35.00 each and may be purchased at the beach. SOS cards are valid from January-December of each year. For more information, please go to: www.shagdance.com

ACSC/SOS WINTER WORKSHOP

DATES: FEBRUARY 20-22, 2009
HOSTED BY: THE DANVILLE SHAG CLUB
LOCATION: DANVILLE, VA
Contact President, John Gilstrap at:
Phone: 424-972-7143
E-mail: gilstrap@comcast.net
or Phone: 434-724-1559
E-mail: jct@chatmosscable.com
Website: www.danvilleshagclub.com
or go to www.shagdance.com for more info