



# Richard Thornton Clay (Dick) 1990

## RICHARD THORNTON CLAY (DICK)

Born in Greenville, N.C. on September 26, 1930, the eighth of nine children, and only Tarheel born to Lottie Hill and William Clifton Clay, buyer for American Tobacco Company, who was known as a "dancing fool" in his day, as were three older brothers in their time.

After four years in Danville, Virginia, the family moved to Winston-Salem, N.C. In 1935, where a concussion, broken ankle, and torn cartilage ended the "young jock" career at R.J. Reynolds High School.

Myrtle Beach Days began in 1945 with spending a week at the Old Colonial Inn run by Ma Vickers on Second Row Ocean Boulevard near the Kit Kat and Patricia Manor. Vacation time at home could no longer compete with "fun in the sun" and the dazzle of beach life with "Sweet Things" everywhere. The return trip was "via Thumb" with limited funds which necessitated sleeping on the beach until Mrs. W. N. Dixon allowed the use of the servants' quarters over the garage, and the Marley Cottage people agreed to a snack and drink stand under their beachfront porch.

Once bitten by the sand fleas, smitten with the Grand Strand sirens, and seduced by the beach boy syndrome, it became imperative to have the sound of surf as background to summer activities which included peeling potatoes at the Pavilion; staying in condemned rooms above Speedy Spear's Bath House; plugging the juke box with coins pitched on the floor by tourists who wanted to watch the beach bums dance; taking snapshots with Baird Sills; working life guard stands with floats, umbrellas, chairs, etc. for both Baker's Beach Service and Ladd's (son of Lucille's Fried Chicken); running the rifle range and anything else for Justin and Eloise Plyler of the Coast Inn and The Gay Dolphin. The pull of the tide continued every summer through 1950.

"O.D." times were limited to occasional Sundays where dancing and beer drinking in public were not banned as at Myrtle Beach. Visits to Spiveys were infrequent and usually "bruising" experiences.

Due to a capricious memory and in order to protect the reputations of any "Sweet Things" with whom I may have danced, dated, clowning around, or shared the Float Shack, I plead "The Fifth" and refuse to attempt to either record or leave out the names of the "three or four, or more" who may still be with us! Bless them all, the long and the short and the tall!

"Good golly, Miss Agnes", there were guys galore along the shore who belonged to the "Sand In My Shoes" fraternity and continue to walk down memory lane with me: Jack Armstrong, Bob Collier, Piggie Davis, Charlie Donohue, Tommy Fanjoy, Bob Hamer, Tommy Hartley, Buck Holcombe, Jack Kennan (who saved my life from the Conway slaughter crew - true story!) "Meatball" Kimble, Mickie Lowe, "Big George" Lineberry, Ken Maddox, "Brick Masten", "Booster" McGuire, Tommy McNeil, Lacy Moore, Charlie Porter, Johnny Baker, Baird Sills, Leonard (under the "B" - 24) Sly, the Taylor Brothers -- Tuck, Bill, and "Baby Ray", Maurice and Ronnie Treadway, and Dick Webb --- to name a few!

Along the way I also wandered over to Wake Forest College and joined Zeta Chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon. In the middle of my junior year I flew off into the Air Force's "Wild Blue Yonder", zooming into Texas, Oklahoma, and Florida before going overseas to "fight" the Korean War in Germany. While on a thirty day delay enroute I was introduced to Anne Simpson of Raleigh at Salem College, where we went dancing on our first date, as well as at the annual Sig Ep Ball and Salem's May Day Fling. After meeting her graduation tour in London, England, we were engaged and later married in Weisbaden, Germany, August 13, 1953. Our first son, Ken, was born in September 1954, before we returned to the States in December and back to Wake Forest in January 1955 where Anne became Sig Ep Sweetheart and I graduated (finally) with the last class on the old campus in May of 1956. President Tribble asked me to help with the transition and relocation to the new campus in Winston-Salem where my temporary staff position has continued for 34 years and I have remained as Director of Wake Forest University Stores. Our second son, Rick was born during a snow storm in Winston-Salem on December 11, 1958.

In between migrations to the beach I have enjoyed "twirling the light fantastic" as often as possible anywhere from Jack Armstrong's porch at Lake Norman, to nights at Sam's and The Guard, as well as June Germans, cotillions, coterries, deb balls, gala benefits, block parties, New Orleans French Quarter Corners, assorted wedding receptions, tea dances, museum and ranch in San Antonio, paddle boat on the Mississippi, and Tavern on The Green in Central Park.

So -- "when the saints to marching in" -- I want to dance.