



Joel "Wormy" Wall 1992

JOEL "WORMY" WALL

In the early fifties, Ocean drive Beach, affectionately called "O.D.", was still a lazy backwater family beach resort. There were two (2) hotels, one movie, a couple of gas stations, a handful of restaurants, and hotdog stands, a corner drugstore, two or three grocery stores, two (2) liquor stores, a small jailhouse, and two policemen - Chief Merlin Bellamy and his Deputy, J.P.

Towering over and dominating all of this was Roberts Pavilion - the center of Ocean Drive's night life.

I came down to "O.D." for the first time in early June, 1951. I left Florence late one night with Billy Kupfer in his green Bel-Air Chevrolet. We had a cooler of beer and about two dozen pieces of leftover fried chicken. The next morning we sat on the steps in front of the pavilion and had beer and chicken for breakfast. I was fifteen years old. I had a about twelve dollars in my pocket and no prospects beyond that morning. I was the happiest little guy on the East Coast.

I came back a short time later with Sam Shipp and spent two weeks with him at his Grandmother's house.

Sam and I kept coming back to the beach almost every weekend for the next several weeks. If it had not been for Doodle Munn, Robert Brunson, and a few other U.S.C. guys buying us hotdogs on Sunday, Sam and I might not have survived that first summer.

By August, though, I was doing odd jobs for Jimmy Ratley at the pavilion. He paid me about two dollars a day and gave me a bunk upstairs.

Billy Moffett and I stayed past Labor Day and helped Jimmy board up the Pavilion. When I got home, school had already started and I caught HELL!

The next two summers, '52 and '53, followed the same scenario. I worked part of the summer for Ratley in '52, and part of the summer of '53 for Roy Harelson who owned the Pavilion.

Just before Labor Day in '53, I broke my arm horsing around one night. My mother found out about it, came to the beach and dragged me back to Florence. That ended my last summer at "O.D."

I met and made a lot of friends during those few years.

There was the Albermarle gang - Tom Lilly, Gene "Swink" Laughter, Jim Keistler, and Crow Doyle.

The Columbia crowd - Moffett, Don Poew, Dicky Poew, Charlie True, Spider Neeley, Del Dom and George Hall.

Larry Blake and Sumter Brawley from Durham; Jack Nichols and David LeGrand from Sumter, Dennis Boam from Shelby, Maurice Treadway from Charlotte, Delano Blackmon from Marion, and Sleepy Timmerman from Greenville. Sonny Small, Bobby Joe Edwards and Bobby Cudd from Rock Hill, Greg Patterson and Rick Lyman from Greensboro, and the "Artful Dodger" himself, Henry "Cope" Walker from Roxboro, who taught me how to get by on nothing.

AND, there were the GIRLS of summer - Lila Skinna from Bishopville, Peggy and JoJo Stewart and Sherbie Knight from Sumter, Margaret Hesta and Frankie Wiggins from Bonnonsville, and Cordell and Joanne Shoup from Charlotte, and then there was Joan Nichols.

I remember that Sunday afternoon in '51 when I first saw Harry Driver dance, and a couple of weeks later I saw Charlie Boone for the first time.

There were the good times, the wild times, and sometimes the quiet times - Dancing in the late afternoon with Joan, having long talks with Craig Blackman about life, philosophy, and other things I did not understand. There were the night parties at the Paradise Grill, and the wild nights at The Flying Saucer on Highway 17.

The Albermarle Gang, drunk and rowdy, cranking up the merry-go-round at 3:00 a.m. and waking everybody within a mile of the Pavilion.

Bobby McDaniels painting his name in green paint all over the seats and posts around the dance floor and later that night, all the jitterbug dancing with green letters on their backs and butts, and McDaniel's being chased and beaten all night long.

And then, one day it was all over. The last Labor Day came and went, and suddenly, you were looking back on your last summer at "O.D."

It was a grand and wonderful ride, and like the song said, "the train kept a'rolling . . ."