



Charlie's Place

Frank Beacham

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“Charlie’s Place” is the true story of the Ku Klux Klan’s violent attempt in South Carolina in the post World War II years to stop dirty dancing and kill the emerging black music behind it—rhythm & blues.

Author Frank Beacham describes how a handful of adventurous young black & white dancers—with the help of a fearless black nightclub owner—risked life and limb in an era of racial segregation to create a bold new dance and an enduring Southern musical legacy.

The story evolved from a series of recorded interviews by the Beacham with many of the key figures credited with the creation of South Carolina’s state dance, the shag, and the state’s music, a sub-genre of rhythm and blues now called Carolina “beach music.”

Most of these interviews are included in this interactive, multimedia book, which not only features many of the first generation Hall of Fame Shaggers, but industry figures like Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records, WLAC DJ “Hoss” Allen, Bill Pinkney, co-founder of the Drafters, Maurice Williams of the Zodiacs and beach music star, Clifford Curry.

In a vivid description, Beacham reconstructs the violent armed assault in 1950 by the Ku Klux Klan in an attempt to shut down “Charlie’s Place,” an influential Myrtle Beach night club where white and black dancers shared the dance floor and helped create what is now called the shag. The violence sprang from the aftermath of one of the state’s most openly racist political campaigns, the 1950 U.S. Senate election between Strom Thurmond and Olin D. Johnston.

“Young black and white South Carolinians—in a time of segregation—put their lives on the line to defy the state’s white establishment and create a genuine musical legacy,” said Beacham. “An irony is that South Carolina’s government officials made the shag and beach music the official dance and music of the state without even understanding or noting it’s remarkable historical significance.”

Over the years, Beacham said, the state’s music and dance has almost completely been co-opted by Southern whites, leaving a new generation of blacks unaware of the cultural phenomenon they helped create. “It is sad that many young blacks in South Carolina have rejected beach music and the shag because they think the music has white-only roots. Years of racism and a lack of education have helped erase one of South Carolina’s most notable creative accomplishments,” Beacham said.

About the author

Frank Beacham is a New York City-based writer and media producer. He is the author of multiple books and has produced television programs seen on several networks. He was executive producer of the feature film, *Cradle Will Rock*, and produced *Theatre of the Imagination: The Radio Stories of Orson Welles*.

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