



Wesley Clifton "Cliff" Merritt, Jr. (2006)

"Cliff" was born in Richmond, Va. on January 17, 1947. He grew up on Davis Avenue in the Fan District of Richmond. He spent his summers in Ocean Isle Beach, NC at his family home and ventured to North Myrtle Beach, SC for the dancing. His favorite venue, of course, was Fat Harold's as well as the OD Pavilion. Those early years as a fast dancer/beach bopper paid off later, as Cliff became an accomplished "fast dancer" as witnessed by his winning \$1,000 with his former wife (Anne) in a dance contest at Kings Dominion in March, 1981.

He got his start as a DJ playing, appropriately enough, at DJ's Lounge where the Richmond Shag Club (RSC) was first organized. Cliff was visiting DJ's Lounge one night in 1986 when the house DJ was too intoxicated to play, and the club owner Angelo Miliotis said to RSC founding member Earl Robinson (VSHOF, 1987; BSNHOF, 2009) that he needed a better DJ. Earl immediately said he had the right man for the job and introduced him to Cliff. Cliff became the house DJ for Angelo and the Richmond Shag Club for the next 29 years. Later, when Angelo and the RSC moved to Club Razzles in the Governor's Palace Best Western Hotel, he followed. Again, when Razzles closed, he and the RSC relocated to Visions Dance Club in the Holiday Inn Select (now the Doubletree Hotel by Hilton). Over his long career, Cliff often played two or three nights a week after his "day job" as a postal carrier. Often at Visions, where the DJ booth was only a few steps away from the dance floor, Cliff would start a song, and slip out of the DJ booth to dance and get back to the booth just in time to cue up the next song. In the early 90's, he started playing on Sunday afternoons at the popular Peppermint Beach Club, becoming well-known among the local dancers in Virginia Beach. Those were some great times which brought back great memories of their youth for all that attended.

Cliff's support of the dance community was also seen in his cash donations to support Junior Shaggers at various fund-raising "dancing for dollars" exhibitions, tossing bills on the dance floor as the junior shaggers performed. His devotion to the dance and the music was recognized first with his induction into the VSHOF in 2006. He was later recognized by his DJ peers with his induction into the Association of Beach and Shag Club DJs (ABSCDJ) Hall of Fame in North Myrtle Beach, SC in 2015. During that trip to North Myrtle Beach, he also was honored by his Virginia shag friends with a commemorative paver on Ocean Drive in North Myrtle Beach, SC. Cliff died April 20, 2015, within a few weeks after his induction into the ABSCDJ Hall of Fame.

Cliff loved everyone, and never met a stranger. He cherished the friendships he made all those years and his love for the shag community was reciprocated as evidenced by the more than 350 people that attended his Celebration of Life.