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May I have this dance, sweet child of mine? Come dance with me.

Jacque McCall never went anywhere, her daughters will tell you, without her makeup being just right.

And her hair.

"You just never know," she always would say. "You just never know."

And she was certainly dressed to the nines just a week ago today at the Fayetteville Area Shag Association Hall of Fame induction ceremony, where McCall was so proud because she would accept Bill West's plaque as the 205th member inducted into the dance shrine.



Photo: Jacque McCall, left, with her daughter, Cathy McCall, at the Fayetteville Area Shag Association Hall of Fame induction on June 28 at Highland Country Club.

"I was so excited when I was told about his induction, because I knew what it would mean to him," McCall said on induction eve about the posthumous honor for her late dance partner, who died in 2013. "I felt like jumping for joy."

Saturday past at Highland Country Club would be his night, and West's induction dream fulfilled.

She was proud of him and proud for him, and she was decked out in her mauve-colored lace blouse, white, draping slacks and -- of course -- her dancing shoes.

Her earrings dangled, with a necklace to match, and her makeup was perfect.

She was eloquent.

"She was excited," Barbara Peele says. "She had a beautiful, sweet smile and presence."

She loved the sounds of beach music and had shuffled those shagging feet of her own across the floor.

"She was the belle of the ball with old friends," the Rev. Archie Barringer was saying Thursday at a memorial service in the Rogers and Breece Funeral Home chapel for Jacque McCall. "Before Bill was inducted this past Saturday, Jesus said, 'I am coming that you may have an abundant life.'"

Jacque McCall, 81, collapsed from a brain aneurysm moments before the induction ceremony and died peacefully a day later while surrounded by family.

"We know family and friends of Jacque are grieved," Barringer said. "But I pray we might be inspired by her legacy."

Jacque Strickland was born on Independence Day, 1932, and was a simple country girl who grew up down Bethany way.

"She lived her life and she lived it well," the preacher said. "And you knew not just who she was, but what she was in life."

She was a gifted athlete for the 1951 Stedman High School girls' basketball team, and the county's leading scorer.

She married Malcolm McCall, worked alongside him in the farm fields, and they raised a son and two daughters.

"She had a vegetable garden like you've never seen," Barringer said. "She shelled butter beans and snap peas, and canned vegetables in the summer so her family could have homegrown vegetables in the winter. There was no better cook, and she made her chicken and pastry from scratch."

She was a seamstress, made her children's clothes and taught them that Magnolia Baptist Church in the Bethany-Stedman community was near, and God was always there.

"She was deeply spiritual," Barringer said. "She was a Christian lady."

She could play a piano, a guitar and an accordion, and all by ear, and sing any song and dance any dance -- from the fox trot to the waltz to the rumba to her beloved Southern shag.

Saturday past, Jacque McCall wore her dancing shoes for a final step or two over the dance floor.

"I'm not going to live many more years," she had told her daughter not so long ago. "I've had a great life, and you, my children, are doing well."

"I'm ready."

"I can't wait," Jacque McCall said, "to see what's on the other side."

We can only imagine.

"Welcome home," some of us can hear God say. "May I have this dance, sweet child of mine? You are eloquent and beautiful and dressed to the nines. Come dance with me, my child. Come dance with me."

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