

Bernie Loveless shares his memories of the dance hall in Chesapeake Beach with Joanne Roach and Mildred Finlon.

Mrs. Finlon: I recall in Chesapeake Beach that they played every night. And it was the same man who had the band at the Lotus in Washington. He came down in the summertime and played. He was the band leader that later had a BINGO over in North Beach.

Mr. Loveless: The interesting thing that people today don't understand in a way to me, there would be lots of people around the ballroom, and a fellow would go up to a girl and ask her, "Can - may I have the next dance?"

And she would think and say, "I have the next dance, but you can have the second one," or, "Yeah, it's okay." There was never any concern about a — like today a stranger walking up to somebody and asking them could they have a dance. We all went there to dance. Everybody — and a plus a third of the people or half of them wanted to go to watch people dance.

And the band would play like three songs, three short songs. Sometimes a guy would sing or one would do a solo or something in with it and different tempos and whatnot. And these tickets would be like three for a quarter. And you could dance to the three pieces for one ticket. A guy would be there on the gate when you want in to dance and you'd give him a ticket.

And I've danced with your mother — all the girls around the beach.

Mrs. Finlon: And you had to have a coat and a tie. The early days you used to have to have a coat and a tie to dance.

Mr. Loveless: I don't remember that too much, but I wouldn't dispute it.

Ms. Roach: So how did he get you off the floor after you had danced your three dances?

Mr. Loveless: Oh, the band stopped playing, then everybody walks off. Everybody comes off the dance floor, come out through the gate. And then in about a minute the band would start up the next piece and they'd start all over again.

Mrs. Finlon: The big shock came when the big round dance floor was free. The big round dance hall was free. And that burned down and they built a big square dance—

Mr. Loveless: Now, that's on the boardwalk —

Mrs. Finlon: On the boardwalk. And then they began to charge admission, but up to that time there had been free dancing on the big round dance hall.

Ms. Roach: Well I've always heard —

Mr. Loveless: I'm not familiar with that.

Ms. Roach: — you know, ten cents a dance, but I never knew how you controlled ten cents a dance, or three for a quarter. And how about dance cards? Did the girls have a card where you're actually assigned when you're going to dance with her?

Mr. Loveless: Oh, no, no, you remembered. Each of you remembered. (Laughter.) You'd — after that piece was over, you'd go scout up the girl you had for the next dance — the fellow would. And she'd be standing there looking around wondering where so-and-so might be or that guy with the curly hair, or whatever.

And they went — well, that's where I — like I've told you before — I met Dorothy. We met up at North Beach. I lived here in the winter; she came down from Arlington in the summer. And we'd gravitate to the dance hall up at North Beach and dance. And this was 19 — we got married in 1940, so it went on up to the next year.