



“THE DANCE HALL”

Of course, one of the most frequently asked questions that I receive from my children and grandchildren is

“What was the Dance Hall Like?”

For me, just thinking of the beautiful old Dance Hall that existed in the “CNR” era brings a flood of nostalgia.

The Dance Hall was the main meeting area for all “campers” at the beach. It was also a great place for people to go for an evening’s enjoyment from Winnipeg.

The CNR ran a special “Moonlight” train leaving Winnipeg at 6:25 PM, which arrived at the Beach at 8:00 PM. Young couples immediately went to the Dance Hall and danced until 10:00 PM, at which time the orchestra took an intermission, so people could return to “THE MOONLIGHT” to return to Winnipeg. It left at 10:25 PM and arrived at Union Station in Winnipeg at exactly 12:00 PM midnight. The orchestra began playing again, at 10:30 PM and continued until 12:00 PM.

The last of the leading Winnipeg Hotel Orchestras to play at Grand Beach was “The Don Wright Orchestra” consisting of Don Wright, on piano, three saxaphones, two trumpets and a trombone, a double bass fiddle and drums. They played all the songs of the “Big Band Era”.



Chuck Guarino



What was it like, Papa?

The Dance Hall began on May 24th and was open from Monday to Saturday of each week, continuing to the Labour Day long week end in September.

The CNR operated Grand Beach in that era. The Dance Hall was operated on a “jitney dance” basis. Each Dance cost five cents. People could purchase dance tickets from several ticket wickets in the Dance Hall. The tickets could be purchased individually for five cents or blocks of 12 tickets for One Dollar.

The Dance area was fenced off, and there were four entrances to the dance floor, where ticket takers were stationed to receive tickets, and allow people onto the Dance Floor. The Dance floor was cleared after each Dance, and then the process was repeated for the next dance.

Sundays were special occasions for the Grand Beach Campers. Mr. Phillip Jones, the Superintendent of the Beach, arranged for “amateur nights”. If any of the cottagers played an instrument or could do a “skit”, they eagerly did so. The Orchestra donated their time gratis and Mr. Jones acted as the Master of Ceremonies.

Like my children and grandchildren, please wait until next issue for another story about the Golden Days of Grand Beach.

Chuck Guarino