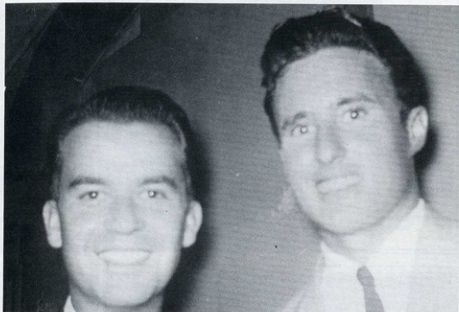


# Salem's Own American Bandstand

If you don't recognize his face, how about his feet?



Jack with Dick Clark in 1957

## By Brenda McDaniel

Where were you between 3 and 5 o'clock on any given weekday afternoon in August 1957?

Put that question to most Americans between the ages of 30 and 40, and you'll probably hear, "In front of the TV set watching American Bandstand."

Ask Jack Fisher and he'll say, "Dancing on American Bandstand."

Fisher, a 37-year-old advertising account executive with Brand-Edmonds-Packett in Salem, was one of the original dancers on Bandstand when it joined the ABC television network in August 1957, an unbelievable 20 years ago.

He either knew, dated or danced with all those South Philly kids whom we—out in the hinterlands—grew to love, hate or envy. He was right there doing the jitterbug, the hop, and the stroll. Rating the records. Making us envious that we, too, didn't have a nasal Philadelphia accent.

Jack Fisher began dancing before television cameras on the Grady and Hurst show, a forerunner of Bandstand on another Philadelphia station. He was a 17-year-old

high school senior from Wilmington, Del. when he started going to American Bandstand in 1957. He averaged three appearances a week.

Jack was only a fringe star among the regulars since his term on the show lasted a mere four months, but in that short period of time his agility on the dance floor and handsome looks had him receiving hundreds of fan letters a week. He still has the mail—stored in a trunk in his mother's home in Wilmington.

"I got letters from girls all over the country, who would invite me to their proms or ask me for a date," Fisher recalls. Some of the infatuated young girls even claimed their parents would pay his transportation if only he would accept the invitation.

"Of course, their parents didn't even know they were writing letters to Bandstand," he says.

The more popular stars such as Bob Clayton and Justine Carrelli got boxes of mail every day. Jack did all right, though. He appeared on the show one day wearing a Bandaid to cover a cut above his eye, an injury received in a fight. Soon after, he received a stack of mail addressed simply to the guy with the Bandaid.



Jack Fisher to

About a month after the show joined the network, the First American Bandstand National Jitterbug Contest was held. By asking the home audience to judge the contest, the show was able to prove its popularity to the network and make instant stars of the contestants.

Jack and his partner, Dottie Horner, advanced to the semi-finals and came in fourth with 700,000 votes. Today Jack's favorite dance is still the jitterbug.

It came as no surprise to anyone, including the other contestants, that Bob and Justine won.

"When we learned the home audience was to vote," Jack says, "we knew who'd win—Bob and Justine—because they were so popular."

Clayton and Carrelli pulled in a mind-boggling one million votes. Each won a jukebox with 200 records. Jack can't remember what was given to the second place couple, but third prize was your own home. Jack and Dottie got nothing for placing fourth, but all the semi-finalists were invited to the Philadelphia premiere of "Jubilee," the first movie in which Dick Clark appeared—portraying himself. The 10 young couples arrived at the premiere in chauffeur-driven limousines.

Bandstand actually is 25 years old, a fact celebrated by Dick Clark at a gala gathering of former regulars and stars televised earlier this year. Bandstand made its debut on WFIL in 1952 with a Philadelphia DJ named Bob Horn spinning the discs. Horn, however, ran into some legal problems involving drunken driving, rape and later income tax evasion. The station fired him and replaced him with Clark in 1956. Clark was 28 years old at the time and on his way to becoming a millionaire by age 30.

Jack Fisher watched that 25th anniversary celebration and wallowed in the happy memories the show evoked. He even saw his young self on some of the video tapes of the early shows.