



2017 Danny Johnson

DANNY JOHNSON

How lucky could a young fellow be to walk into Red's Beach Club and find that Wes May and Phil Jones were the house instructors, ready to help me learn the proper shag? Phil was a grade school classmate and was one of the best technical dancers ever! He introduced me to Charles Gurley, Milton Nowell, Mike Pace, Bill Young, Charlie Womble, Doug Perry, Norfleet Jones, Sam McIntosh, Bob Myrick, and the smoothest couple ever (in my opinion) John and Pee Wee Teel.

Charles and Milton rarely taught specific steps, instead, they taught me how to dance freestyle; to feel and love every movement down to the most basic step. Mike and Phil taught me the basics and the fundamentals of weight shift. That skill fascinates me still today. Judy Duke provided many dances at Ducks just exploring freestyle. Most recently I discovered Mike Osborne and the junior shaggers that are truly amazing to watch.

Growing up in the south Raleigh-Garner area, I watched the Hillsborough St. college preppy era evolve in the mid '70s. Crazy Zack's was my club of choice. The college scene at Western Carolina University continued to fuel that influence, where during Fraternity Rush Week in 1977, I walked into the Delta Sigma Phi House to hear the music of The Platters, The Thymes, and The Temptations (to name a few). Every Brother was smartly dressed and this combination of style and music made a life-forming impression on me. Many thanks to my Delta Sigma Phi Big Brother, David Fowler from Greenville, NC. He has forever given me a mentor to aspire to.

I took a random trip to North Myrtle Beach where I spent a weekend at Fat Jack's. The place was packed with dancers and I knew I had to learn more. It was finally time to better learn this dance we call the Shag.

In the late '80s, I spent time in Atlantic Beach where there was Ray's Club, Mary Lou's, and Courtney's Beach Club. All were within walking distance from our place; we were there practically every Friday and Saturday. It was dinner at Island Grill, a walk to the shag clubs, and then shuffle back down the sandy street in the early morning hours, just to do it all over again the next night.

On a most memorable night at Red's Beach Club in 1987, Charles Gurley told me that the best shag lesson one could ever experience could be found in the club that night – those lessons were named Sandra Schwartz, Ellen Taylor, and Babs McIntosh. Over the years I've enjoyed clubs across North and South Carolina including Loafers, Jolly Knave, Courtney's, Atlantic Beach Pavilion, Embers, Harold's, Duck's, Groucho's, and many more.

I spent many nights with Bonnie and Larry Hales, traveling to Loafer's and many shag clubs, and I made lasting friends and memories with Rick and Maureen Little. After competing at the Pro level in the '80s and '90s, raising a family became my priority with two wonderful children Jordan and Cameron. Judging SPA, CSA, and judging the Nationals was my only shag contribution until 2010.

What an amazing time it has been: reconnecting with old friends; making new friends; shagging; and most importantly, marrying my wonderful and beautiful Love, my two-time National Shag Champion Melissa Sharpe Johnson! I could not have found a better partner to share this life with and I am blessed by God, without a doubt. Thank you for your support and love. I love you. I am so honored and proud to be inducted into the Beach Shaggers National Hall of Fame. Thank you all and God Bless.