



Johnny Church - 2019

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In 1961, at Hawthorne Jr. High School, I had to do a spotlight dance at the school's Valentine Party. My buddy, Jerry Smith, taught me the basic shag step and a turn because we thought that would be the dance for the spotlight. It was Valentine's Day and guess what, it was a waltz, not the shag. We would dance at the school's sock hops on Saturdays and at Cordelia Park Teen Center. While at Garinger High School, I got my drivers license and started driving everywhere. I can remember going to Park Center and flying down the stairs to get to the dance floor. We had some great times there and at The Cellar, B&G Trading Post, and the Pour House. I danced several times on a local TV teenage dance show called Kilgo's Canteen.

We went to Myrtle Beach Easter, Mother's Day, Labor Day, and in the summer or any other time we could. We would stay in one of the cheapest hotels we could find. During the day, we would spend time at the pavilion or lay out on the beach. At night, we would head out to OD and spend time at the pavilion and The Pad. This was in 1962 and we were just kids from North Charlotte looking for a good time; a good place to dance and pretty girls.

After high school, I joined the Navy and was stationed in Charleston, SC on the USS Johnston DD821, a WWII Destroyer. We went on a six-month Mediterranean tour of duty visiting France, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Turkey. I received my Honorable Discharge in August 1969.

One night at the Cellar in Charlotte, I met Carol, my wife. She has changed my life in many ways, all for the better. We have two children, Jerry and Leslie, and five grandchildren: John, Madeline, Zach, Presley and Ava.

We settled into family life for many years. When our children were teenagers, Carol and I went to the beach for the second SOS. I had never seen so many good dancers in one place. In 1982, we started group shag lessons with Shad and Brenda Alberty at Groucho's and took group classes for two years. To get better as dancers, we competed in SPA, took private lessons from Shad for about five years and went through the SPA ranks of amateur, novice, and pro.

We finished third in the Non Professional Division of the 1990 National Shag Championships; and in 1992, Al Mann of Munn & Associates asked us to do Dancing On The Strand, Advanced Shag Instruction Video. Carol and I have been fortunate to do many things in the shag world like hosting a shag contest for Paramount's Carowinds, and dancing at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. We've taught shag classes on several SOS Shag Cruises and an AAA Motor Club Cruise, and we've been invited to teach at The Greenbrier, Lynn's, JB'z and various other clubs.

Thanks to Randy Rowland for having Groucho's, our home club, where Shad and Brenda Alberty taught all of us how to dance. The friends and memories made there will last us a lifetime. I look forward to continuing to promote the dance, the music and making new friends. It has truly been a journey that has enriched our lives. I am very honored to become a member of the BSNHOF.