



NORTHERN VIRGINIA SHAG CLUB SHAG RAG



Shag Dancer Newsletter

Dedicated to the Preservation of the Carolina Shag and Beach Music

Vol. III, No. 7

Keep on Shaggin'

July 1996

From the President - By Charlie Price

By the time you read this, our first annual Capitol Shag Classic will have come and gone. The way things are shaping up, I know that the weekend will be a great success. Many, many members worked very hard to help make this weekend a success, but it would not have happened without the tireless efforts of **John Belt**. Thank you **John**, it is no exaggeration when I say that we couldn't have done it without you. (P.S. I hope that everyone noticed our new dance floor!)

Apropos of last month's letter, a poll of the membership showed that most suggestions and requests for change in our Wednesday format concerned two subjects -- music and lessons. For those of you who have been around DeJa Vu the past few weeks, I trust that you've noticed that we have already changed from our old single DJ format to a multiple DJ format. **Craig Jennings** is our coordinating DJ, and based upon my own experience and the many positive comments received from others, it appears that everyone is enjoying the music more than ever. Our goal is to have a guest DJ at least once a month, so that the music will remain fresh and exciting. If you have any further comments or suggestions concerning our music, please communicate directly with any member of the Music Committee, namely **Fred Whitman**, **Craig Jennings**, or **Charlie Price**.

Beginning a couple of weeks ago, we also initiated changes in our shag lessons format. Thanks to the continuing efforts of **Rick Hendrix**, **Chris Pax**, **Bill Hopkins**, **Janis Grimes**, **Phyllis Schulte**, **Larry Boyer**, **Mark Rollings**, **Donna Harrington**, **Joan McKinney** and **Charlie Price**, from here on out we will have fixed lesson plans set up on a four-week cycle, and you will see more instructors, all of whom have agreed to follow a cooperatively formulated, standardized teaching format.

SO, KEEP THOSE CARDS AND LETTERS COMING FOLKS, KEEP ON SHAGGIN' AND SEE YOU AT DEJA VU!

Saturday Shag Party

July 20th
Beach Music

by "The Gator"

at

Dancers

Willow Lane, Bethesda, MD

Cover Charge - \$10 members; \$12 others

FREE SHAG WORKSHOP

at 8 p.m.

BYOB - Beer and Wine ONLY

(No Hard Liquor permitted on premises)

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Dance Weekends

How They Benefit Your Dance

By Mark Rollings

Do you remember what the weather was like over Memorial Day weekend? I don't, because on Friday afternoon I walked in the front door of the renaissance Waverly Galleria Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia, and did not see the outdoors again until Monday morning when I went back to the airport to return to DC.

What held my attention so tightly over that weekend that I never even left the confines of the hotel and its galleria? THE SECOND ANNUAL SOS GRAND NATIONAL DANCE CHAMPIONSHIPS! (Which really means the presence of hundreds of good-looking women. . . but that perspective falls under the topic of how dance weekends can benefit your social life, which is another topic for another article.) Now, back to the topic for this article . . . which really means the presence of hundreds of women that feel like a feather on a cloud when, at the beginning of a really moving dance tune, they place themselves on the end of the arm of some shagger or swing dancer.

I go to a lot of dance weekends (both shag and swing), but this weekend will be one that I will try to return to year after year. Why was this one so special? Because it drew some of the best shaggers and swing dancers in the country and, even though they were better than me, **THEY WERE WILLING TO DANCE WITH ME!** And no matter what anyone tells you to the contrary, two of the most important ways to become a better dancer are to (1) spend time on the floor (which can become exhausting); and (2) spend it dancing with those who dance at a higher level than you (which is almost always intimidating).

This weekend gave me the opportunity for both, and I took advantage of it. **NOTE: The following diatribe is not meant to bring attention to me, but to motivate YOU!**

Floor Time.....I danced all weekend: from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. on Friday; from 12 noon to 3 a.m. on Saturday; and again from 1 p.m. to 3 a.m. on Sunday. That is a total of 37 hours. Granted, some of this time was reserved for competitions, but I was on the floor dancing about 7 out of every 10 songs for at least 25 hours. The lesson I have learned about floor time is that each and every time I execute

some move or piece of footwork, it becomes more ingrained in my muscle memory and begins to appear in my dance without me even realizing that I am doing it. In other words, it becomes natural. **There is apparently no substitute for repetition.**

Intimidating Dances......I have found that the only thing that is more stressful than asking someone to dance (at least when you think they are a better dancer than you, and you think they would really prefer not to dance with you) is . . . actually dancing with them after they say YES to your request! I have embarrassed myself many, many times, both when I ask someone to dance (by stumbling over my words), and during the dance (when I would get off beat, execute a move poorly, fail to lead a move very well, and worst of all, lose my balance and run into them). This weekend though, I chose to feel my fear and do it anyway. I asked many, many ladies to dance, including Hall of Famers, National Shag Champions, US Open Champions, and a multitude of other, marvelous dancers (both professional and non-professional), all of whom dance at a level to which I aspire. **Not everyone accepted my invitation**, but almost everyone did, and I danced many times over the course of the weekend with each of those who did accept. Some of those dances were better than others, but each and every dance **with a higher level dancer made me a better, more experienced dancer because I got to FEEL how THE DANCE is supposed to FEEL.**

Always remember, however, that every time you dance with someone at a higher level, the person who is dancing with you is dancing with someone at a level lower than their own self. Keep this in mind at all times, and make sure you invest yourself in others the same way others invest themselves in you.... by making it a point to seek out those who aspire to dance at your level and **DANCE WITH THEM.** You don't have a license to ignore them, and **unless they ask for it**, you don't have a license to critique or even teach them. Just **DANCE WITH THEM.**

Editor's Note: This makes the case for attending the 1st CAPITOL SHAG CLASSIC. It's still NOT TOO LATE – EVERYBODY is WELCOME to COME and DANCE – hope to see you there!!

Shaggers Do It With Their Feet

Shagger Profile ..

Sandy Powers

Nickname: Sandy

Occupation: Kindergarten Teacher

Birthday: July 24

Hometown: Annapolis

Marital Status: Divorced ('94)

Self-Portrait: High-energy, fun-loving, party-seeking, people meeting, serious, mature, professional.

Motto: Unless you're the lead dog, the scenery never changes.

Dream: Accomplish every goal on my "life's list."

Inspiration: We are the masters of our souls and cannot let the past defeat us.

Favorite Dance Tune: Black Velvet

Bad Habit: Napping, then staying up late.

Hobby:: Figure Skating Coach (Ice)

Luxury defined: Happy family gathering on holidays

TV Program: Good Morning America

Drink or Wine: Diet Coke / Champagne

Books at bedside: Men Are From Mars

Last words: "All women die; some never live."

Editor's Note: GO, Girl!!

WANTED: STORAGE SPACE

for our new dance floor. Do you have access to reasonably priced, climate-controlled storage? We built our own dance floor for the Capitol Shag Classic weekend party, and need to find a place to store it. Please contact John Belt with ideas, suggestions. Anyone, anyone??

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C., June 7 & 8 -- NVSC members **Bill Hopkins & Chris Pax** showed up at a CSA (Competitive Shaggers Association) competition held at Ducks, and took 4th place out of 9 shag couples in the Amateur Division!

Cheering for them on the sidelines (*along with everyone else in the room!*) were fellow club members **Dan Shames and Janis Grimes**, who withstood the drive and the smoke just to be there. Other familiar faces spotted were **Larry & Shirley Jones** (who have moved up to the pro division); **Sam & Sarah West; Trae McCants & Jennifer Beaver; George Hamrick**; juniors who took our breath away(!); the legendary **Chicken Hicks**, and many other wonderful dancers.

Placing ahead of shaggers from the Carolinas in a CSA competition is no small matter; in fact, it is a LARGE deal! CONGRATULATIONS to **Bill and Chris!!!** Keep on going -- we are proud of you!



The Roving Shag Reporter...

*Another NOVA Couple is
ENGAGED!*

Steve Adams and his fiancée, **Nancy Harpine**, announced their engagement recently at Deja Vu! A date has not yet been set; HOWEVER, the RING is ON HER FINGER!! Stay tuned for more romantic rhythm & news from this reporter.....

FOR RENT: Nice CONDO in North Myrtle Beach: 2 BR, 2 Baths, 4 blocks from Fat Harold's, 2 blocks from Ocean. Sleeps 6. Swimming pool, washer/drier. (SORRY-- not available during SOS!) CANVASBACK -- Contact Beachcomber Realty, 800-334-3798
WINNER -- Shag Rag's Cool Condo Award

The DJ Booth ... By Craig Jennings

Summer is finally here and those of us who love the long, warm days are in heaven. However, the weather is not the only hot thing around right now. The beach music scene is also heating up as some hot new music makes it onto the dance floors around the southeast.

The Embers released a new CD during Spring SOS titled, "Let's Have A Party." This new release is a virtual "who's who" in beach music with such artists as Jerry Butler (*Coolin' Out*); Johnny Adams (*She Said The Same Things To Me*); Fingers Taylor (*Standing At The Crossroads*); Bill Pinkney (*Move Across The River*); and John Ellison (*Love Is Not All Things You Gave*). To date, the hottest dance cut on this new CD has been the remake of the old Billy Joel song *Just The Way You Are*, which teams The Embers with Jerry Butler (the Iceman). *Just The Way You Are* is currently #13 on the Rhythm & Beach Top 40. Johnny Adams and The Embers also form a nice team on the remake of the Clyde McPhatter (of Dominoes and Drifters fame) song, *Lover Please* (my personal favorite.) This CD is packed with good beach and shag music and is as the CD says, "A GENUINE HOUSE ROCKING AFFAIR."

Another group reaping the benefits of increased play time during Spring SOS is the Mojo Blues Band. Their new release, "Rhythm & Blues Party" includes several very good shag songs, such as *Take a Train Train*, which is currently the #11 song on the Rhythm & Beach Top 40. Other "Rhythm & Blues Party" songs that received considerable dance play during Spring SOS include *Money Ain't Reason Enough*, and *Got My Mojo Workin'*.

The Mojo Blues Band has also provided shaggers with remakes of several classic beach songs. On the "Rockin' Boogie Flu" release they pay homage to beach music's first generation artist Big Joe Turner by covering an old classic of his, *Wee Baby Blues*. The band renamed the song *Oo Ee Baby* and does a fine rendition of this old beach classic. Other covers on that CD include *Drinkin' Wine Spo/Dee/O/Dee* and *Sea Cruise*.

Of course, a number of other extremely good dance songs are currently on the Rhythm & Beach Top 40, so enjoy the heat of summer both on and off the dance floor and keep on shaggin'!

FYI.....

JET EXPRESS has discontinued flights to Myrtle Beach from BWI, for ... whatever reason.....

New Members in June

WELCOME, new members!! Glenn Ball, Bonnie Nelson, Howard Weiner



Happy, Happy Birthday

July Birthday Babies:

- 1 - Neil Byrd
- 1 - Fred Whitman
- 5 - Mike Winters
- 6 - James Baird
- 10 - Larry Boyer
- 10 - Patricia Pepper
- 13 - Joan Salvadore
- 14 - Steve Bethke
- 15 - Jean Sellers
- 15 - Helga Taranto
- 18 - Mary Taylor
- 22 - Sandy Shecter
- 25 - James Kirby
- 26 - Jerry Crews
- 28 - Dickie Gee
- 29 - Vesta Jones
- 29 - Gary Salpini
- 29 - Karen Wagley

The Shagmaster Says....

- Take SMALLER STEPS
- Do NOT carry drinks onto the dance floor!
- Men -- Take your hands OUT of your pockets!
- Remember -- Attitude of Coolness
- Be patient with yourself -- and with others
- PRACTICE the Basic Every Day



From the Editor.....

FLASH!!! Exciting news y'all -- this year, for the FIRST TIME, there will be a CAROLINA SHAG DIVISION at the U.S. OPEN National Swing Dance Championships in Anaheim, California, Nov. 29, 30 - Dec. 1, 1996. Shaggers get ready!!!

REMINDER: We will be taping Pinky O'Neil's cable television show "Dancing Around" on Wed., July 10th, at Deja Vu. Everyone is welcome to come and SHAG, and share the fun!!

See ya Shaggin'

DANCE

THE RETURN OF THE SHAG

Languid, sensual steps to rhythm and blues are newly popular

BY ROBERT P. CREASE

EACH YEAR DURING the second week after Labor Day thousands of people from all over the Southeast flock to North Myrtle Beach, a town on a stretch of the South Carolina coast called the Grand Strand. The event is a gathering of the Society of Stranders, and its principal function is to celebrate a dance called the shag, a staple of Carolina life. The shag is a slow, easy dance that developed in the late 1940s and early 1950s to early rhythm-and-blues music, but it has endured a lot of changes since then. After a hot summer's day at work, or at the beach, many Carolinians think there is no greater pleasure than grabbing a few beers, heading for a local nightclub, and shagging the evening away. Small wonder that the shag is the state dance of South Carolina, that shag clubs exist in every major city and hundreds of smaller towns in both Carolinas, and that perhaps hundreds of thousands of people do it all over the South.

But few people outside the South have heard of the shag, and even fewer can do it. This may change soon, with the release this month of *Shag*, a film featuring the dance as choreographed by Kenny Ortega, who achieved national recognition as the choreographer of *Dirty Dancing*. Ortega first learned about the shag from some extras who worked on *Dirty Dancing*. "When I finally saw tapes of people shagging, I fell in love with it," Ortega says. "The shag is stylish, it's sexy, and all kinds of people of all ages do it. And what I hope we've captured in this movie is that the shag is a central part of the Carolina life-style."

THAT ESPECIALLY AMERICAN confluence of black music and white kids, usually at hangouts frowned on by adults, gave birth to the shag in the 1940s on the Grand Strand, the fifty-five-mile crescent-shaped beach running north from Georgetown, above Charleston, to the North Carolina border. At that time the Strand was the summer habitat of large numbers of col-

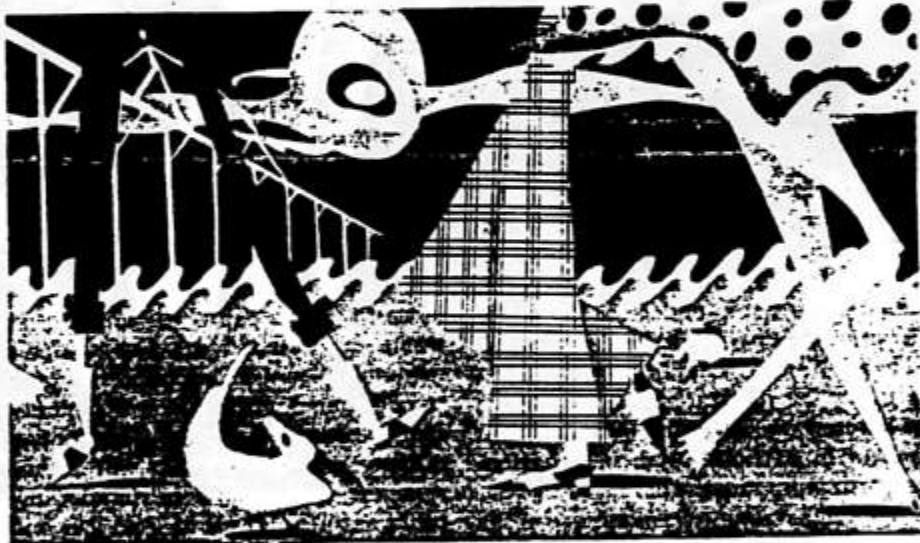
lege kids, from all social levels in North and South Carolina, who had become addicted to the free and unruly character of beach life. Away from the supervision of parents or campus authorities, these college kids tended, of course, to act like irresponsible good-for-nothings—beach bums—and were treated as such both by locals and by servicemen on leave from the many military bases in the area.

The college kids learned to make a virtue of necessity by accepting this

with a Wurlitzer jukebox. There the beach bums hung out until somebody came along who could afford to set the machine whirring: a nickel bought one song, a quarter bought five. Until the end of the war white teenagers heard only swing music and danced only the Lindy hop, better known as the jitterbug—a vigorous, jumpy dance that had swept the country in the 1930s. The cooler beach bums preferred hot black bands such as those of Lucky Millinder and Jimmie Lunceford, and the steps they danced to them were smoother and less frantic.

"Nobody started out to invent a new dance," says Billy Jeffers, who first came to the Strand in the late 1930s and stayed through the mid-1940s. "We just didn't think all those jerky jitterbug movements fit in with what life was like at the beach. So we began to dance the way we talked to girls—nice and easy, and real laid back."

An accident of geography changed



community rejection and cultivating an aloof, "cool" demeanor. Cool meant, first, a look: for the boys, long, slicked-back, peroxided hair with ducktail, V-necked sweater with no shirt underneath, custom-tailored baggy pants; for the girls, short shorts, cut to reveal a sliver of panty. Cool footwear consisted of simply Weejuns or moccasins; socks were uncool. But cool also meant following a certain routine. Days were spent on the beach. Shortly after dusk the beach bums walked along the boardwalk to the numerous open-air pavilions that were the social centers of all the communities along the Grand Strand. Each had a refreshment stand, an arcade, and, most important, a wooden dance floor

that slow, cool jitterbug into a distinctive dance all its own. Smack in the middle of the Strand was a single, utterly segregated black community called Atlantic Beach. To this day the beach road makes a detour inland to avoid the town. Atlantic Beach jukeboxes were then stocked with what the trade called "race music"—that is, records made by black musicians and marketed to a black audience. (Only in 1949 did *Billboard* magazine reclassify "race music" on its charts as "rhythm and blues.") Around 1947 Jim Harris, a white man who owned and stocked most of the Strand jukeboxes, including those in Atlantic Beach, began to stick some race-music records, as a curiosity, into some of the Wurlitzers in

