



# Shag Rag

Shagger Newsletter

*Dedicated to the Preservation of the Carolina Shag and Beach Music*

Vol. IV, No. 11

Keep on Shaggin'

November 1997

## From the President

As 1997 draws to a close we have two important dates to think about.

**November 19<sup>th</sup>** Election Day for the Northern Virginia Shag Club. You will find a ballot in this *Shag Rag*. Not only will you decide who will represent you in 1998, but you also need to choose a charity for the Club to adopt. The ballot has been prepared so that you can remove it, vote, fold it in thirds, place a stamp on it and mail. It's already addressed. If you cannot be with us on the night of the 19th to vote in person, please mail your ballot so that we receive it by the 14th of November. ALL mail-in ballots must be SIGNED.

**December 13<sup>th</sup>**, Holiday Party at the VFW. **Betty Abshire** is in charge and will be collecting money for this event each Wednesday. Tickets are \$10.00 for members/\$15.00 for non-members before the day of the event, \$15.00 for all if you pay at the door. Help us to plan by paying early.

We wish each and every one of you a very Happy Thanksgiving. Please have a safe holiday.

## VOTE!!

Wed., Nov. 19th  
Lulu's at Blackie's

**ELECTION of New NVSC Officers  
and  
Board of Directors  
for 1998**

*Be There -- or Be Square!!*

**BALLOTS included in this issue for out of town members!! REMEMBER TO VOTE!!**

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**HOLIDAY PARTY  
with Myrtle Beach DeeJay  
STEVE BAKER**

Saturday, December 13th  
McLean VFW

**Dinner and Dancing  
FREE Shag Workshop**

**Tickets:**  
Advance purchase - \$10 (Members only)  
Non-members - \$15  
At the door - \$15

Coordinator: Betty Abshire 703-680-5115

## **A Word About Our Classes. . . by Chris Pax**

As Coordinator for dance instruction at NVSC, I am called on to make decisions about what will and will not go into our classes every Wednesday night. I get a lot of great input from you, our members, and especially from the Shag Instructors group, which meets every couple of months. Since we can't put EVERYTHING in, I thought I might share with *Shag Rag* readers my take on what the purposes of our program are, and the guiding principles that I use to decide what makes the cut. As I see it, the program has three main goals.

### **1. Welcome Newcomers.**

Every week, The Curious show up at our club, hoping to catch a glimpse of Shag and wondering if this is a dance they might be able to learn and enjoy. They come because a co-worker at their office has been talking about us, or a friend dragged them here on a bet. They come because they've heard about S.O.S. and they want to learn some shag before they head down to the beach and take The Plunge. They come because they were surfing on the net, saw our web page, and just had to check it out. They come because they saw someone doing the dance somewhere; maybe they saw the "Alabama" video, or maybe they saw Charlie and Jackie competing at a swing event. Some of them come remembering a dance they did in college, hoping that this might be a way to get back into that dance from the good old days. And some of them were just here for a quiet dinner at Blackie's and decided to poke their heads in the next room to see what all the racket was about.

We want to welcome all these people, with all their diverse backgrounds, into our club. We want to take that initial spark of curiosity and feed and water it. Face it, we want them to get hooked. After all, that's what happened to us! And if you think about it, you've really got to get hooked, or you'll never make it. Shag is not the easiest dance to learn. It takes more than a passing curiosity to get good at it.

### **2. Teach Newcomers the Fundamentals**

A lot of people (the number is astonishing to me) do get hooked. They want more than a taste. They want to learn this dance. They are eager and they know their rights. If we didn't offer them lessons, they would demand them.

We want to give Those Who Are Hooked the most effective instruction possible, so that if they invest twelve full weeks diligently attending our beginner and intermediate classes and dutifully practicing both on the dance floor after the class and at home they will have RESULTS. They will know the basic components of this wonderful dance, and they'll be able to go on learning from other sources after that.

The men should have enough material to lead several 4-minute songs with good variety. The women should be able to follow most leadable steps led by social shaggers. Both should have a nice collection of basic variations to draw on.

"Mirror patterns" have a short shelf life and discouragingly limited range: the ones that are commonly done in Virginia Beach are often unheard of at Carolina Beach. In our classes we do teach a few mirror patterns that are popular at our club (the sugarfoot, the arch, and others), but the primary goal is to teach the more universal fundamentals of our dance, so that when you are swapping steps with other shaggers at a dance weekend, or trying to learn a new mirror pattern at a workshop, you know, for example, what a front prep is; can perform a good, solid lean; have mastered the boogie walk; and can do a respectable pivot; these are the stuff mirror patterns are made up of. Once you know these things, mirror patterns are pretty easy to learn. But if you've learned fifty mirror patterns and then go to NMB with a pivot as big as a merry-go-round, well, please just don't tell them all down there that you learned to shag from the Northern Virginia Shag Club...

### **3. Provide NVSC members with a means of improving and polishing their fundamentals.**

I will never stop attending basic skills workshops. I will always be trying to improve my pivot. And I hope that if I keep working on it maybe someday I will be able to do a decent boogie walk. I have heard from many of our club members who feel the same way. I see them in our classes. This is wonderful not only because all of us can improve, but also because having stronger dancers to practice with makes the newer dancers learn faster. Experienced NVSC dancers who attend the Wednesday night intermediate classes give a gift to the class, just by being there.

### **What is there for NVSC dance program graduates?**

Sometimes club members ask us to put more advanced steps into our already crowded program. This I am reluctant to do, although I'm happy that the interest is there. There is oodles of stuff out there that you can take advantage of once you've mastered the fundamentals.

Thanks to the truly heroic efforts of a handful of club members, our club has an aggressive workshop schedule featuring big name shag talent. What these workshops do is bring these talents right here to Springfield. You can take a full day of workshops, go to a great party afterwards and, in most cases, also take private lessons from these fabulous dancers. We've sponsored workshops with some of the best --

Bill & Brenda Barber; Ellen Taylor; Sam West & Sarah West; Brent Key & Shea Carver; Larry & Shirley Jones; Sy Creed & Dana Brown, Susie Beaver; and Sonny & Judy Carver (John & Joanne English are coming soon, too!). These workshops have been just excellent. If you're ready for more, then come to these workshops!

The dance parties and weekend events of other shag clubs often include lessons that feature intermediate and advanced steps. If you're looking for more, get in the car and take to the road!

Our club has a constantly growing library of shag instructional videos. These videos contain more intermediate and advanced steps than you can shake a stick at. And they're FREE to club members. All you have to do is put down a refundable \$10 deposit. If you're hungry for more, borrow those videos!

And perhaps the very best thing is predictably also the one that costs the most: private lessons. Again, you may have to get in the car and spend a few bucks, but there are some great shag instructors to be found on the East Coast. Talk to people whose dancing you admire and ask them where they learned. Some will tell you they grew up doing it, but others will tell you about a particular person who taught them. Go ahead and take private lessons! Now that you have the fundamentals, you're ready for the Big League. People are often amazed at how much even a few lessons, where you're one-on-one with a good teacher, can help.

Just because you learned a lot from the free NVSC program doesn't mean it's the only place on the planet where you can learn. If you have graduated from the free program, then now is the time to invest in your dancing. I urge you to do it! The more good dancers there are, the more fun it is for all of us!

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#### TREASURER'S REPORT... by Pauline Easby-Smith

As of October 31st, our club had \$3,022.73 in the Treasury.

## Atlantic Beach Weekend . . . by Vesta Jones

As many of you know, **Pauline** and I commute to shag. We take advantage of many of the shag weekends and this past weekend it was to Atlantic Beach, NC.

The Atlantic Beach Shag Club had their first annual Shag Classic over Columbus Day weekend...kind of like a mini-SOS...1 ticket got you into all 3 of their dance clubs all weekend...a Carolina pig-pickin' was included as was lunch on Sunday...AND a free Judy Duke shag lesson! The DJs were great. The shuttle worked fine, we never had to wait more than 4 or 5 minutes for a shuttle to come take us to one of the other clubs. And the beach, the water and weather were spectacular.

Remember the story about the definition of smooth shagger with the beer can on his head? Well, he did it again at Atlantic beach...the beer can was open, he danced the ENTIRE dance...then when the dance was over, he took it off his head and drank from the can ... he's Ed Lewis from Wilson, NC and I have lots of respect for his smooth style!

As ever, the best part of a shag weekend is seeing old friends (it was great to see and dance with **Mark Rollings** and **Larry Roach**), making new friends, and shaggin' with wonderful dancers...dancers who just love to shag. We even went on Sunday night to the Newbern place to shag (The Oar House)...more great shaggers, old and new friends and good music...we're smilin'.

### No. VA Shag Club On The Web!

<http://www.sbolnet.com/shag>

Kudos and thanks to **Val Swiger** and **Jeff Zaun** for their help in improving our NVSC website. **Val** has learned how to work on the Internet and is now updating our "Events" page. **Jeff** has provided pictures (on a computer disc) for our "News" page. I want to thank both for their help. I do need help in improving and maintaining our website...volunteers are welcome! Check it out

Shaggers Do It With Their Feet

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## Shagger Profile -- Kelly L.P. Matthews

*Occupation:* Public health (currently work for an international health project doing HIV/AIDS prevention in the developing world)

*Birthday:* April 22nd

*Hometown:* Complicated! Mostly Woodbury, Conn.

*Marital Status:* Single

*Self-Portrait:* Fun, occasionally loud, Jeopardy contestant wanna-be

*Dream:* Get into grad school for my doctorate and have it before I turn 30. Next - buy a house.

*Inspiration:* My mother - we went through our Master's program together.

*Favorite Dance Tune:* Been There, Done That by Francine Reed

*Bad Habit:* Talking too much

*Hobby:* Antiques; refinishing furniture; reading; skiing; travel; cooking.

*Luxury Defined:* Snowy afternoon, roaring fire, big comfy chair, big glass of wine and a wonderful book

*Drink or Wine:* Margaritas, or if wine, a cabernet

*TV Program:* X-files

*Books at bedside:* Too many and always changing

*Last Words:* I've wanted to learn this dance for a long time, and now that I'm finally doing it, I'm thrilled. It's as wonderful as I imagined it would be. Watching the wonderful dancers in the club is inspiring, and everyone has been so kind to me as I stumble over the floor!

## New Members in October

**WELCOME**, new members!! Brendan Anderson; Matthew & Charlotte Brussock; Pat Canestra; Donald Cook; Wanda Dodson; Betty Elliott; Ron Johnson; Shawn Lapinski; Sharon Marsh; Kelly Matthews; Gaye Proctor; Billy Romydy; Cyndi Strickland; Keith Teele; Walt Warme; Jean Witz, Jeffery Witz

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## VA STATE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Sam West & Sarah West  
were here!!**

The Virginia State Open Swing Dance Championships were held again this year at the Tyson's Westpark Hotel, October 9-12. Competitions in all types of swing dance, including Carolina Shag, were highlighted. Congratulations to new champs **Bill Hopkins & Melody Wayland**, who took First Place in the Amateur Carolina Shag Division. Other NVSC members who danced were **Dan Shames & Janis Grimes**, and **Rick Hendrix & Cecile Rocek**. Thanks to all competitors, and to all who supported our dancers and our dance.

Juniors **Michael Norris & Nikki Kontoulis** danced a beautiful demo in the Open Carolina Shag Division, making a wonderful impression on the many dancers who were packed into the ballroom. For the past two years **Michael** has won top honors as Best Overall in the National Shag Championships, which are held each year in Myrtle Beach, SC. **Michael** also danced an awesome swing/shag combo with legendary swing dancer **Debbie Ramsey**. If you missed seeing all the incredible dancing at this event, you really missed it!

**National Champions Sam & Sarah West** taught shag workshops, and private lessons to anyone who was interested. The Breakaway Pivot that we learned is a beautiful step that we'll be seeing a lot of, I think.

Thanks also to **Craig Hutchinson** for his tireless efforts at promoting shag. Some of you may not know that **Craig** was inducted last year into the Living Legends Hall of Fame for his many contributions to dance. It was **Craig** who brought **Charlie Womble & Jackie McGee** into the competitive swing circuit, thereby introducing Carolina Shag to the rest of the country.

## NVSC ROSTERS AVAILABLE! (FOR MEMBERS ONLY)

It's almost Christmas card time! Order your NVSC roster now. On Wednesday nights give your name (and \$2.00) to **Val Swiger** or **Vesta Jones**. The following week you will receive your club roster, updated the week of your order. (*Please note: rosters are available to club members only.*)

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**FLASH!!** NOVEMBER 19th -- CABLE TV will tape a promotional commercial about our dance and our shag club at Lulu's on Wednesday, November 19th. Come on out and share the excitement! It will be aired on cable Channel 16, advertising Carolina Shag lessons to be offered through the Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services. Beginner classes will be taught by Janis Grimes at 7 p.m. on Thursday nights at Woodburn Elementary School, Gallows Road in Falls Church, VA. Members who want to brush up on their basics are encouraged to sign up for the six-week course beginning on January 8th. Details will follow. Info -- call 703-324-5540.

## Happy, Happy Birthday

### November Birthday Babies:

- 3 - Walt Warme
- 5 - Shayne Carstews
- 5 - Bill Hopkins
- 7 - Jack Tellado
- 8 - Valerie Swiger
- 10 - Roy Camp
- 12 - Carl Montoya
- 13 - Jerry Barker
- 13 - Lesley Loeb
- 13 - Ed Magin
- 16 - Dennis Gehley
- 20 - Carol McAlee
- 21 - Larry Roach
- 21 - Steve Adams
- 21 - Eddy Farmer
- 24 - Harvey Niblack
- 25 - Annie Foster
- 27 - Sharon Marsh
- 28 - Gloria Alcors

#### NVSC COMMITTEES and DIRECTORS:

Capital Shag Classic	Valerie Swiger
Charity	Pauline Easby-Smith
Communications	David Rodgers
Dance	Janis Grimes
Hospitality	Vesta Jones
Membership	Valerie Swiger
Music	Craig Jennings
News.etter	Janis Grimes
Promotions, Sales	John Belt
Social	Betty Abshire; Joan McKinney

# HELP!!

## DONATIONS NEEDED!!

We need DOOR PRIZES for our Holiday Party. Can you help? Please call Betty Abshire with suggestions and donations, 703-680-5115. Please Donate something good that you'd like to win . . . maybe you 'll win something!!

### The Shagmaster Says....

- Shag is More Than Footwork! It's a Southern Dance of Style and Grace....
- Remember APSP: Attitude, Posture, Style, Presence
- FLOW with the music ... *Glide*, as if on skates.
- Step On The Beat
- Do Not Bounce! It's not the bop!
- PRACTICE the Basic: Up Together Back; Back in Place; Rock Step. 1 & 2; 3 & 4; 5, 6



### From the Editor....

**WHAT A BLAST!!!** Back from the Virginia Beach Bash, with the rhythm of the Music still pounding in my head, feet(!), heart and soul. It just doesn't get any better than this, folks! Those of you who are going to the Twister's Fall Cyclone (you lucky ones), please bring back some new steps, new friends and experiences to share with us!

**REMEMBER TO VOTE!** Election of New Officers will be held at Lulu's on Wed., Nov. 19th. Or Mail In your ballot before Nov. 14th!!

As always, this is YOUR newsletter. Do you have an idea, a suggestion, a thought? Would you like to submit an ad, an article, a column, your *Shagger Profile*? Just let me know, okay?

*See ya Shaggin' .....*

