



# Debbie Rickard 2006

## DEBBIE RICKARD

I grew up in Thomasville, N.C. and my first recollection of any type of music was as a youngster listening to the radio play at home or in the car. I first went to the beach in the very early '70s when my mother would take me, my brother, and my sister camping in Myrtle Beach at Sherwood Forest Campground. There was a small pavilion on the beach down from the campground and I would go down there at night to hear the jukebox and watch people dance. I fell in love with the music and the dance they were doing, and learned later that they were doing what was called the bop or shag. I knew that I wanted to learn to do that, and I wanted to keep on hearing the music that I first fell in love with at that old pavilion.

I continued to listen to the radio at every opportunity but didn't get a chance to learn the dance until the late '70s when I would try and learn on my own. I went to my first true shag club, or beer joint, when I went to the Bushes in Greensboro in the early '80s. I just loved it from the very beginning and was totally amazed at the dancing that those people were doing. Dancers like Eddie Paige, Glenn Doub, Danny Bean, Jack Smith, and Sharon Jackson were a major influence on me and the way I wanted to dance. It was so much more than I had seen at the beach, with more style, panache, and excitement that I just had to learn what they were doing. I began taking lessons from Dave and Judy Moore, two really terrific dancers, who took a lot of time with me and helped me develop my style based on what I had seen at the Bushes. I just couldn't get enough of the dance and the music, and went to a beach club at every opportunity not only to get better, but to dance with some of the great dancers I had seen and heard about. I also had the enormous privilege of meeting Charles Gurley in the early 80's and was greatly influenced by him regarding his style of dance, rhythm and blues music, and the love for the dance, the music, and the people. I have been truly blessed and inspired by this association and my friendship and love for him and Kathy has endured and gotten even stronger over the years.

Early in my dancing I was fortunate enough to be able to go to some of the truly great clubs ever in the Carolinas, clubs such as Fat Jacks and Harold's Across the Street in Ocean Drive, The Sand Flea in Greenville, South Carolina, one of my favorites, Loafers and the old Reds in Raleigh, the Jolly Knave in Atlantic Beach, and of course my all time favorite, the Bushes. Eventually, I started competing in small dance contests with Ervin Ellington, and Tim Nelson, and then with Don Bunn, whom I still dance with some now, and then was fortunate to get in some bigger dance contests. I loved the competition but more importantly, I loved the friendships that I made that have lasted so many years. I have continued my love affair with the music and dance, and it has been a most joyful part of my life. I can't imagine living without all of it.

Being inducted into the Shaggers Hall of Fame is an overwhelming experience and one that I will treasure the rest of my life. To be thought of by your peers as worthy of such an honor is very humbling and I hope that I can continue to uphold the trust and confidence that has been bestowed upon me with this great honor. I thank all those people who have been so influential in my life with dancing and the music, and appreciate the time they devoted to me. Thanks to all of you, and I look forward to continuing the good times and friendships that dancing has brought to my life.