



Debra Barta - 2016

DEBRA BARTA

I grew up in Greensboro, NC, as the child of two jitterbuggers from the 40's. My love of the beach started in 1950 at the tender age of three. I was fortunate to spend a large portion of my summers mostly at Windy Hill Beach but also along the Grand Strand beaches watching the dancers. I was a dancer from age 5 with tap, ballet and ballroom. I was fas' dancing at the "pavilion" by age 12 with my first partner and cousin, Dennis Kuck. At age twelve I was thrilled when the boys would ask me to fas' dance! I just loved the music and the dance. Being around the boys wasn't bad either.

In Greensboro it started at Castaways, then Jokers 3, Bushes, Nickelodeon, Gene's, Thirsty's and a few others. In between were numerous trips to OD, Charlotte, Greenville, Raleigh, Winston-Salem, Columbia, etc. I entered and won a few contests in Greensboro during the mid-60's at clubs and recreation centers. Prizes were usually bar tabs - no money, no trophies, just fun. In the 80's, I picked up a few more steps, thanks to Susie Beaver and Phil Pritchard. I still enjoy entering mixed doubles contests.

I moved to the Charlotte area in 1970 and a few years later ran into Lacy Moore who told me about Groucho's. I married while living in Winston-Salem and we moved back to Greensboro after my daughter was born. Being single again in 1983, Bushes was my favorite club, but my first SOS didn't happen until 1985 at Fat Jack's back then. In 1996 along with quite a few other shaggers, my daughter, Nikki Kontoulas and I were in the music video by Alabama, "Shagging on the Boulevard." Nikki and others were more visible than I was, but it was a fun unforgettable experience.

I've shared my love of the dance and music with my daughter, Nikki, who is a pretty good Pro competitor. Some of you may remember the many trips she and I made for all the junior dance contests, but I wouldn't trade anything for those wonderful memories. It was when Nikki (at age 10) was learning the dance in 1990 that I began dancing on the male foot to help her practice. I started teaching private and group lessons in the late 1990's and still teach private lessons at my home.

I have met some of the most wonderful people through this dance that we now call The Shag. Some of these friends I've known for nearly 40 years. Being inducted into the Beach Shaggers National Hall of Fame is such an incredible honor. A huge heartfelt "Thank You" to all of you because I still love the music, the dance, the people and the beach.