



# JENNIFER DUKE BATTEN

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Shag is more than just dancing; it's a legacy I hope to pass to my children. I'm incredibly grateful to have grown up in this shag community where we seize every opportunity to celebrate dance and soak in the music and laughter that surrounds us. This has been my source of pride and most treasured gift from my mother, Judy Duke, because it has been a constant source of support and happiness for my family. The shag community has taught me invaluable life lessons and fostered deep, lasting friendships, shaping our family values and instilling curiosity, open-mindedness, acceptance, and thoughtfulness towards others.

I was destined to be a shag dancer. My parents were leaders in the shag dance community as club owners, dance instructors, competitors, judges, and DJs. They were extremely social and as far back as I can remember our home was a revolving door of legendary shag personalities. I vividly remember meeting Charlie and Jackie when she was only 24 (they are still my idols today). My sister, Jodi, and I began dancing as kids, competing in the first Junior Shag contest held at Mint Juleps in Wilmington, NC in 1981. I also had the privilege to represent the state of NC in 1982 at the World's Fair, and had one of the best summers of my life dancing in *SHAG: The Movie* alongside Jodi and lifelong friend Sarah West - among many others. In between semesters at ECU, earning my BFA in Painting and Drawing, I loved to dance to beach bands and travel to area shag contests. I rented an art studio from Babs Macintosh and worked in her dress store. Upon graduating, I moved to Ocean Drive where Bob Baker (Ducks owner) was my landlord, and I worked at Ducks while waitressing at Cagney's - both great shag spots! I also used my skills to hand-letter posters and create art for shag clubs including designing the logo for The Grand National Shag Dance Championships - that's my handwriting across the current logo!

Most importantly, it was through shag dancing I met my husband, Mitch Batten Jr, after his parents, Mitch and Sue Batten, professional shag dancers themselves, began taking lessons from my mom. I knew he was the one when I saw how naturally we fit together and how much more I loved my life with him by my side. I am honored to be a Keeper of the Dance, and together, Mitch and I have taught many beginners to shag dance at Fat Harold's. We remain active in the community volunteering with Competitive Shag Association and the Junior Shag Association and cheering on our children, Jackson and Lizzie, as they teach shag and compete. I will be forever grateful for the opportunities shag dance has given us - and it is remarkable knowing that many of the shaggers who watched our children take their first steps will also attend their weddings and watch as their children learn to shag, too.