



## **CONNIE MCCOOK (2015)**

Connie's first encounter with "swing" dancing was when she was 7 years old. Kenny, a neighbor in Richmond, had older brothers "in the know". They taught her this new dance called the "Bop". They practiced to The Del-Vikings' "Come and Go with Me" in their living room. She watched American Bandstand religiously until free-style became popular, but was too young to be a part of the swing dance/bop era and not fortunate enough to be around "swing"

dancers for the next few decades.

In 1993, finding herself unattached after a long-term relationship with a non-dancer, a fellow math teacher and friend, Steva Williams (VSHOF, 2014), thought she might like this dance called "The Shag". Although she had never even heard of it, she encouraged me to try it anyway. In January 1994, Connie took her first shag lessons with VSHOF members Larry and Kathy Williams at Steppin' Out. Instantly "hooked", she took every class they offered. She was dancing 4 nights a week (Mondays at lessons, Wednesdays at Mix and Mingle, Fridays at Steppin' Out shag night, and Sundays at the Holiday Inn or the VBSC Sunday Social). Connie went to her first SOS that spring and felt like Dorothy in "The Land of Oz".

Connie says she owes a special debt of gratitude to Pat Dorvin (VSHOF, 1995), a New Orleans native, who worked tirelessly to teach her to focus less on steps and more on "dancing the dance." Pat gave her the confidence to do a one-time performance with him in a talent show at her church so her church family could see a demonstration of this dance which she insisted to all was so much fun.

Over the years, her love of the dance gave this introvert the courage and confidence to walk into shag venues alone, not knowing a soul or what to expect. In addition to attending local shag club events, she had the opportunity to go with friends to weekend parties of the Richmond Shag Club, the Twisters Shag Club (Mooresville, NC), the Jolly Knave Reunion (Raleigh, NC), and the Twin Rivers Shag Club (New Bern, NC).

After retiring from teaching, Connie tries to be in North Myrtle Beach, SC as often as possible. A friend, Monty Lee (formerly of Virginia Beach and a popular dance partner in N. Myrtle Beach where he relocated), introduced her to a number of great shag dancers in his adopted hometown. Connie considers herself blessed to have many opportunities to work on improving her dancing and ability to follow different leads, which she considers the greatest joy of shag dancing.