



## **DIANNE JESSIE (2020)**

Diane has had a love of music and dance her whole life. This came naturally for her as her parents made sure she was always around dancing. They would take Diane to many dance venues in Richmond and exposed her to various dance forms. Her favorite memories growing up were dancing with her father at various dance events. As a premonition of things to come, she would then teach her brothers to dance, making this a family activity. Her love of dance continued throughout her school years attending all school sponsored dances as well as many dances at local venues in Highland Park.

Several years later after going through a series of life changing events, Diane found a dance called "Shag" and decided to take shag lessons. In 2001, she took beginner shag lessons at the Richmond Shag Club (RSC) and immediately fell in love with the dance. Many great VSHOF member dancers like Bill and Marsha Faris, Cindy Slade, Earl and Beverly Robinson, Sid and Linda Strawderman, Ralph, Vicky, Joe and Marsha Tedesco; Dinky Slaughter, Phyllis Wells (and many others) inspired and helped her develop strong Shag fundamentals. Diane credits all these dancers and the numerous others that freely gave their time to teach her, but it was Cindy Slade (VSHOF, 2018) and Phyllis Wells (VSHOF, 2011) who took her under their wings and encouraged her to stick with this dance. As she continued to hone her technique, Charlie Williams became a major mentor in advancing her skill set and teaching her more advanced steps. In a very short time, Diane became one of the RSC's more skilled and popular dance partners. In just two short years, Diane and her dance partner Phillip Mitchell (VSHOF, 2015) won the Most Improved Couple Award for 2003 at RSC. Other accomplishments included placing 4<sup>th</sup> in the O.D. Arcade's SOS Rookies' Revenge shag contest. A highlight of her Shag career was, along with Phillip Mitchell (VSHOF, 2015), being invited in 2015 as Shag instructors on a Carnival Shag cruise in the Caribbean.

She soon discovered that the members of this extended family were always willing to help her with fundamentals, technique, and refinements as she developed more advanced steps. As a result, Diane became more involved in the RSC's activities in order to give back to the dance by serving on the and numerous committees such as: Annual Boogie on the James party, Social Committee, Way & Means Committee, and the Dance Committee, which she currently (2023) chairs as a member of the RSC Board of Directors.

However, Diane's most rewarding contribution has been as a dance instructor for over 15 years. She has taught numerous beginner and intermediate classes for RSC as well as for numerous other organizations. A few such other locations include: Petersburg Country Club, Hopewell Moose Lodge, and the Manchester Moose Lodge. Additionally, she taught the basic step to many people attending events at the Ashland Street Party, Wintergreen Resort, Smith Mountain Lake, and as a guest instructor at the Southside Shag Club in Crewe, VA for Ron Bessent.

Diane also has participated in numerous demonstrations at retirement/assisted living facilities in the Greater Richmond/Tri-Cities area, at many special events for various country clubs, and at other festivals such as the Town of Crewe Annual Homecoming Weekend and the Crewe Chicken Festival. She has taught hundreds of students and truly enjoys helping people learn this dance. However, being able to teach young people who can carry the dance into the future is especially rewarding to Diane as she has closely worked with the area's junior shaggers. Regardless of who or where, Diane has always been willing to help anyone who wants to learn the shag. She feels that this is her opportunity to give back to the dance which she feels is the true spirit of this dance!

Diane has not restricted her activities to just the Richmond Shag Club. She has provided support to other clubs and organizations by attending their functions and other events. Some of these are: The Virginia Beach Shag Club, Outer Banks Shag Club, Mooresville Fall Cyclone Event, Charlestown WVA Shag Club, Virginia Shaggers Hall of Fame Induction ceremony, and National Living Legends to mention a few.