



VESTA DENNING (2006)

Vesta was born in 1943 in Atlanta, GA. She lived in College Park (a suburb of Atlanta) until she left for college in 1961. Around 1951, Vesta's older sister, Marilyn, came home from being a full-time counselor at summer camp in Toccoa, GA, full of "shag-fever". Every weekend the camp staff had gone to Myrtle Beach, learned to shag, and the passion caught on. Marilyn taught Vesta when she came home. When Marilyn wasn't available, Vesta learned to practice (at the age of 8) by tying a nylon stocking on a door handle, and going through the motions for hours. As a teen-ager, she'd dance whenever possible, but the "pickin's" were slim, and her eventual husband didn't dance.

Once Vesta was divorced in 1992, she would dance any place and style she could...a little east coast swing, jitterbug, zydeco, folk...anything. In 1995, after 3 different men at 3 separate dance locations suggested she try Blackie's in Alexandria, VA where shagging was happenin' every Wednesday night, it was all she neededshagging every Wednesday night, followed soon by attendance at SOS, Mid-Winter's, DJ Throwdown, various weekend club parties....anything...she had the "shag-fever."

In 1995, Vesta joined the Northern Virginia Shag Club (NVSC) and later, after relocating to Virginia Beach, she joined the Virginia Beach Shag Club (VBSC) in 2004. With the NVSC, Vesta served as Club Secretary for one year, as President for 2 years, and suggested the formation of and served on the NVSC Shag-a-thon Committee for several years. The Shag-a-thon was the NVSC's annual event that served two useful purposes: it was a MAJOR fund-raiser for the NVSC's charity, and it served as a fun and effective Public Relations initiative as the Shag-a-thon was always held in the center court of one of the large shopping malls in the DC area. After her ACSC "Shaggin' Icon" award in 2003, Vesta also participated in the development of qualifications for the ACSC/SOS Shag Icon committee.

She was one of the producers of and teachers on the NVSC's instructional shag video. She was on NVSC's Capital Shag Classic committee for 7 years, and chairing the event 1 year. She was a member of the NVSC dance committee for 6 years (until she moved to Virginia Beach) and danced with the Virginia State Shag Team in 2004 and 2006. This team competed in Alexandria, VA, Myrtle Beach, SC at the National Shag Dance Championships, and at the USA Grand Nationals Dance Championships in Atlanta, GA. Vesta also competed with David Rogers in Myrtle Beach at SOS, and several local competitions and performed several shag demonstrations. Vesta taught probably hundreds of hours of group and private one-on-one lessons with David Rogers (VSHOF, 2013).

Vesta took Carolina Shag to the Florida Keys. She and David Rogers had a free community shag lesson for anyone in the Keys who wanted to learn. She planned and hosted 3 years of Shag parties in Marathon FL, teaching lessons with VSHOF 2017 member Jerry Hardy as the DJ all 3 years. She and Jerry took a shag demo to the local Marathon, FL high school and gave the dance class a shag lesson.

Vesta has no regrets about her adoption of the Shag "lifestyle" and the Shag Community. Shag itself has provided her many, many hours of joy and the Shag Community has provided her an extended network of shag-lovers so that most places she travels, she can find a place to dance. THAT is pure joy

Vesta's "era" as a shagger has been one of joy; however, because of the loss of so many friends, one of sadness as well. It is one reason she always requests the song "Shadow Shaggin'" (by Tommy Black and Blooz) ... which recognizes and honors so many of the founders of the dance that have passed. As to what's ahead, Vesta has always said she would probably drop dead, "mid-sugarfoot" on the back floor at Fat Harolds on her 95th birthday. She sees everyone gathering around, looking down and saying "... what do you think happened? She was doing so well"!

Among her dance accolades, Vesta was named by the Association of Carolina Shag Clubs as a "Shaggin' Icon" in 2003, inducted into the Virginia Shaggers Hall of Fame in 2006 and the National Living Legends of Dance in 2007.