



Jennifer Wattenbarger 2009

JENNIFER WATTENBARGER

Born in 1950 in Cleveland, Tennessee, the only child of Mary Frances and "Goldie" Wattenbarger, I listened to big band 78s on the big RCA phonograph. An interest in music and movement was fostered by afternoons of American Bandstand and a doorknob. My mother loved to dance and my father, in spare time from his newspaper publisher profession, managed a local band. Occasionally I got to "tag along" to their performance at area high schools and public venues, introduced to the music and dances of the day, from Tennessee icons Elvis and the Everly Brothers to Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry-jitterbug, bop and twist.

By the mid 60s I was a teen attending sock hops, Friday night YMCA dances and Dick Clark's Cavalcade of Stars road shows. As a ballet student, junior high and high school band member and majorette and junior college cheerleader, dance in some form was part of my daily life.

In 1969 I married and in 1972 gave birth to only child, Chris Murphy. The disco 70s were on as I completed my Masters' Degree in counseling at University of Tennessee at Chattanooga just before relocating to South Carolina.

My intro in the shag began in Spartanburg. I was entranced by the couples' dance I saw and for me watching wasn't an option. I spent many evenings at Scandals in Spartanburg, Club Savoy and The Sand Flea in Greenville not only developing my love for the dance but for the people I met. Under the watchful eye of Rick Hubbard, founder of ShagAttack and the Hall of Fame, I defied the words "stay in your basic".

Work took me from the SC upstate to the NC coast at Carolina Beach, dancing at Wilmington's Mint Juleps, then to Fayetteville and Sh-Booms before my ultimate stop-North Myrtle Beach boasting Fat Jack's, Harold's Across the Street and OD Pub. I learned the geography of the Carolinas by frequent road trips to competitions and events and scheduling medical marketing appointments to coincide with shag nights at Charlotte's Steak an Ale and Groucho's, Columbia's Fanny's and Red's in Raleigh. I danced my way to "Pro" in 1986 with Dennis Robinson and captured the 1988 SPA Pro Couple honors with Ronnie Shue (HOF 2009).

I went from observer to competitor to instructor, teaching for over 10 years under the various roofs of icon Harold Bessent and for an array of convention groups. Son Chris came home during college breaks bringing a slough of fraternity brothers for home-cooked meals and learning to shag. In summer of 2009, granddaughter Caila, much to the delight of her "GiGi", and daughter-in-law Kelley, decided shagging was a fun family thing to do and proceeded to learn the basics. Four-year old grandson Andrew and (Papa) Hank Beuke, not yet ready to hit the floor for dancing, supportively watch.

Of course without the music there would be no dance and I was mentored by some of the best: beach music historian Harry Turner, DJs Jack Moore and the late Richard Nixon. *It has been a great journey to this "Hall of Fame" and I thank you for allowing me to be part of your lives. I am honored to be among this elite group!*