



Frances Ann Rouse

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I don't remember a time when I wasn't shagging aka "bopping". Having an older sister required me to be "the partner" for practice purposes. We would "bop" on the living room floor, in front of the TV, while watching Teen Canteen and American Bandstand on Saturdays. As I grew older, I would practice my bop steps holding on to my bed post or door knob. I would dance the summers away at the Minnesott Beach Pavilion on the Neuse River. I danced with extended family and beach friends; exchanging steps while listening to blues, rhythm and blues and Motown. When I wasn't at the River, I was dancing at the clubs in Kinston...the Annex, King's Palace, Chap's and Red's Place. When Red's Place first opened, Tommy Hussey and I would dance on the concrete floor between the pool tables when a good song came on the jukebox.

As I grew older, I migrated to Atlantic Beach and began dancing at the Ember's Club and Pavilion. March 1975 was my first visit to the Jolly Knave, Atlantic Beach. That's where I found out the "bop/fast dance" was actually called the shag. A new found friend, Donna Ruse, entered me and my cousin, Allen Pressly, in a Shag Contest at the Knave that summer. Although we were eliminated early, I was hooked and a terrific shagging career began. I made many new shagging friends, Susan Jarrett, Danny Bean, Barbara Cannon, Judy Bazemore for starters and the list increased. I did not have a specific dance partner. I danced with a different partner in each contest. Other competitions included The Bushes in Greensboro, Bananas in Wilmington, and Red's Place in Kinston, to name a few. I enjoyed judging contests at the Jolly Knave in Atlantic Beach, Red's Place, Mint Julep's in Wilmington and Fat Jack's in Ocean Drive. I have many mentors during those days. They were kind enough to always offer advice and show folks how to do their steps; the sugar foot, pivot, boogie walk, duck walk, kick-back. Tommy Hussey, Shad and Brenda Alberty, Norfleet Jones, Susan Jarrett, Spider Kirkman, O'Neal Branch, "Tubby" Madden and Judy Bazemore danced the night away and shared their steps and expertise with others.

I taught shag lessons for 30 years in eastern North Carolina. Since I did not have a partner, I taught the male and female steps..teaching men how to lead and ladies how to follow. I taught dance etiquette and stressed the importance of having fun on the dance floor. I always told my students two things: 1. "We are here to learn to shag and to have fun because Shagging is fun." 2. "There is no ERA in Shag dancing...the man always leads and the lady always follows." Gentleman this is your dance so enjoy! I taught at Jackie Howells's School of Dance, Studio "86" School of Dance, Kinston Recreation Department, Chaps, Red's Place (all in Kinston), and The Boardwalk in New Bern. My largest class had 75 beginner students while teaching at Chaps. I donated lessons for fund raisers and taught private lessons in client's homes. I well-up with pride when I see my past students out on the dance floor enjoying the music and having fun. I feel I have accomplished my goal and the Shag dance will continue on through time.

"Now this is why I love the Shag...good music, good friends, good drink and best of all...great steppers. It doesn't get any better than this!"