



Gail Holmes

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I was raised an Army brat and a strict Southern Baptist and was not exposed to any music or dancing at a young age. In my young twenties I moved to an apartment and needed a roommate. I had the great fortune to meet a girl that knew how to shag, Clara Barnes, who remains my good friend today. I had never been in a club in my life. I thought I might burst into flames! She took me to Ocean Drive North in Rocky Mount owned by Norfleet Jones! Shag lessons were taught by brothers Percy and Thad Thornton from Raleigh. I immediately loved the music, the dance, and the people!

I made so many great memories and new friends during that time. I met Ernie Holmes there! When I met Ernie in 1981, he was already dancing and competing in the Novice division. I told him we could date but I would never dance in a contest. We went to Raleigh one night with Harvey Ham and Gail Ball to watch them dance in a contest at Reds. However, they were not allowed to dance because they were sanctioned Pro dancers. They signed us up and did not tell me. Imagine my surprise when they called mine and Ernie's names and I had to step on the floor and dance right then! That's how I danced in my first contest! We won first place and I was hooked.

In 1983, Ernie and I got married. He was the only dance partner I ever had and I treasure all the great memories. We eventually taught shag lessons in Rocky Mount for ten years with our good friends Mike and Gail Boykin. We traveled everywhere there was a contest. We went to many SPA Banquets. We danced at the Nationals many times. Back in the day the top five at the Nationals won a trip. The trips were amazing and the best memories were made. We also danced on the National Shag Dance Team. We danced halftime of a Charlotte Hornet's basketball game and our son, Adam, got to meet Michael Jordan. As a team we traveled in the snow, we danced in pouring rain, and danced in extreme heat! All great times!

When we lost Ernie to cancer in 2001, the shag community showed up! I was so incredibly touched to be loved by our dancing family.

Learning that very first basic step changed my life so wonderfully and I wouldn't trade it for anything! Now our son, Adam Holmes, is dancing and understands the love of the dance, the love of the music, and, most importantly, the love of the people.

The love of all this will last forever for me!