



# Gail Blanton Simpson - 2021

## GAIL BLANTON SIMPSON

I was born at home in Davie County, N.C., near the mill town of Cooleemee, on Route # 4, Mocksville, located between Salisbury and Winston- Salem. It was a nice little community, but lacked excitement at times for my grammar school best friend, Dreama Sue Osborne, and me. So, we found ways to create our own fun, usually centered around music and dance. In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I set out to convince our teacher that music appreciation was lacking in class. After smiling sweetly, I asked if Dreama and I could bring our 45's to school and stay in at recess with a few "boyfriends" willing to be our partners, and dance. And she let us!! Now we had to bribe these little boys by inviting them to our house parties where we had refreshments, more music and dancing, and something about a social game that involved a spinning bottle. I can't say whether I participated in that game or not! But I will say I fell more in love with the dance, a kick style basic then, the music, and the fun it generated. I spent time at the Cooleemee Recreation Center, at Lake Hideaway pavilion, and dancing with lots of doorknobs in hopes of becoming a better dancer, one that could dance in a "real" public place and with a "real" shagger by the time I was a teenager. Mission accomplished!

Family vacations at OD as a young teen allowed me the chance to go to the Pavilion, dressed in my patch madras and weejuns, and dance with the "big dogs". What a thrill! I remember walking with my mom one day past The Pad and her sternly telling me to NEVER EVER go in that place. Guess what happened around sundown...fun times making great memories! I subsequently fell in love with clubs/joints and could sometimes talk my older cousin into taking me to a few, like The Polo in WS. I would fudge about my age, get in, & have the time of my life!

When I was 16, I met the future love of my life, Monty, at a dance (wouldn't you know) in Salisbury. His being a musician, vinyl collector, and dancer meant that our years of dating were spent at band practices, gigs at various clubs and frat houses, and going to concerts at places like Park Center. Once we were married, we settled into making our nest, having two wonderful children, Monica and Clint, and doing "regular" stuff. Later Monica blessed us with two fabulous grandsons, John and Thomas, and Clint had fun shagging for a while on the junior circuit. I enjoyed a 24+ year career in Human Resources. Over the years, I was fortunate to live in various places including Salisbury, Garner, Charlotte, Greensboro, Jamestown, Trinity, and currently North Myrtle Beach. Many lifetime friendships were created as well as an appreciation of the many styles of the dance found in shag clubs like The Bushes, Castaways, Thirsty's, Loafers, Groucho's, Lynn's, The Guard, and many more.

I enjoyed over 15 years in competitive dancing, including SPA, CSA, Nationals and Grand Nationals. It is the many special people from so many different places that has truly enriched my life...they have become family. Little did I know when Monty and I met at such a young age, that we would be married for 53 years at the time of his death in 2019. He is forever in my heart, and I am so happy and very proud that I got to share his joy when he was inducted into the Beach Shaggers National Hall of Fame in 2017.

Truly I am forever humbled, grateful and honored to be a 2021 inductee into the BSNHOF.