



Mike Desantis - 2021

MIKE DESANTIS

I was born and raised in Brooklyn NY. Recognizing my rhythm and love for dance, my mother enrolled me in tap dance lessons at the age of ten. My instructor told me I was a natural for the dance and I continued to take lessons for the next four years.

In 1959, my family moved to the Isle of Palms, SC. Wow, what a change for a 14-year-old teenager from Brooklyn. I looked different, acted different and let's face it I was different. My cousin, a native of Charleston, told me if I wanted to fit in I had to learn how to shag. So I put away my tap shoes and put on my shag shoes. I loved the music and this new dance called shag. I continued to practice and dance my way through high school and college at USC. I found knowing how to shag was a great way for meeting girls and making friends. This has remained true throughout my life.

I continued to go where the music and dance took me. In my 20's and 30's, my favorite dance spots in Charleston were Sassy Fats, Mirage and Sea Side at Isle of Palms and in Columbia, Polo's and Weejun's. When I moved to Florence in 1979, I started going to Ocean Drive to shag. My favorite dance spots were Harold's, Fat Jack's and Duck's, where all the best dancers could be found. This was an exciting place to be! It was the beginning of a new era, the resurgence of the shag. Across the Carolinas shag contests were happening, SPA was being formed and SOS began. The shag was not just a dance, it was a life style.

During this exciting time several opportunities came my way. In 1980, I entered Fat Jack's 2nd annual Labor Day shag contest, earned my position on Harold's "wall of fame", became a SPA judge and managed a shag club in Florence, SC. With a lot of help I organized two SPA contests, one at Bogies in Florence, and the other at the Mirage in Charleston. These contests brought in the best dancers from the Carolinas and paved the way for future generations of shaggers to come. These contests would not have been possible without the help and support of my friends in Columbia, Florence, Myrtle Beach and Charleston, way too many to name. In looking back, I realize these were some of the best times of my life, making friends and memories that would last a lifetime.

In the last ten years I have remained active in the local shag clubs. I have supported as many out of town events as possible, dancing, judging and teaching along the way. In 2020, I was honored to be inducted into the Charleston Area Shaggers Hall of Fame and, also, nominated for the National Legends of Dance. Now, in 2021, what a shock and surprise to be inducted in the most prestigious of all, the Beach Shaggers National Hall of Fame. What an honor to be recognized for something I love so much. This would not have been possible without all the friends I've made along the way.

I will continue to go where the music takes me and hope to see you there!