

MARY ANN LAMBERT



To paraphrase an old saying, she “never met a dance she didn’t like.” Born in Richmond in 1942, Mary Anne has always loved to dance, starting at the age of 4 with lessons in tap and ballet. When formal instruction wasn’t available, she turned to watching movies and TV variety shows to study and pick up other moves and dance styles. At age 10 she taught herself the Charleston and when American Bandstand came along, she was transfixed by daily TV broadcasts after school, learning the Cha-Cha and the Stroll. Her penchant for dance was recognized by her friends who often asked her to teach them how to Bop. Later in high school, she was asked to perform in variety shows doing the Charleston, The Irish Jig, and the Mexican Hat Dance. In her senior year of high school, she was voted the best female dancer of her graduating class.

In college, the opportunities to dance, perform and learn new steps continued, picking up The Twist, The Mashed Potato, The Hully Gully and The UT. She became acquainted with The Peppermint Club in VA Beach, working 2 summers as a waitress next door. After graduation in the mid-60s, her repertoire continued to grow with new dance styles, like The Hustle, The Bump, The Monkey, The Jerk, and The Skate. To her, the style didn’t matter, she learned it (as she puts it) “...to look cool on the dance floor.”

As mid-life set in, she returned to the study of tap dance, joining a song and dance troupe which performed for and entertained audiences in nursing homes and churches. Her dance group even participated in a national talent competition and won a gold ribbon. Then in 2000, she (and her husband) attended a concert in Petersburg that opened a new chapter on her dance life. It was there she met VSHOF member Cliff Merritt. She heard about SOS in N. Myrtle Beach and the Richmond Shag Club. From her first SOS in 2001, she was hooked, attending regularly for the next 18 years. In 2007, she (and her husband) joined the Richmond Shag Club and they became regular attendees. From their first SOS experience, they discovered that Shaggers love to party! Whether cruising and shagging their way through the Caribbean, or dancing up and down the East Coast, from West Virginia to Clemson and Hilton Head, South Carolina; she was out on the dance floor.

With her local shag club, Mary Ann has helped with the club’s annual party, Boogie on the James, pitching in on the charity Silent Auction and Free Pour Committees for 5 years and joining the party’s entertainment program in 2012 and 2015. In 2016 her diverse dance background was recognized and she was asked to be the Club’s line dance instructor, offering a monthly line dance class as well as teaching at the Club’s annual party. She (and her husband) have become stalwart members of the Richmond Shag Club and instrumental in the Club’s charitable fund-raising efforts. From a beach music concert in Petersburg 23 years ago, she feels blessed for the friends and dance venues she’s met along her shag dance odyssey ever since.