

ACSC Winter Workshop

North Myrtle Beach, SC January 17, 2015

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Cecil Martin and I just finished my 2nd term as President of the Palmetto Shag Club (PSC) in Columbia, SC.

Robin asked me to talk a little bit about our club and recommendations for new presidents. Needless to say I am proud of our club and I have learned a lot serving as its president. I think that all of you new presidents will also. I hope that some of the things that I'm going to share with you will help you. I know that all those presidents of clubs that have spoken before me helped me. Remember, it's O.K. to borrow ideas from others and make them your own.

Today I am going to tell you a little about our club, a couple of the challenges we have faced recently, our

calendar of events, our charitable contributions and then make some recommendations for new presidents.

A little about us

Our club was founded in 1992 by people who love to dance and loved what has come to be known as “beach music”. I’m not going to bore you with the ups and downs our club has been through over the years because I know most if not all clubs go through ups and downs at some point. What I would like to share with you is some of the things we do as a club that I think might help you or give you some ideas for your clubs.

Our club has about 200 full members. We currently have two classes of members: full members and associate members. Full members pay \$50 a year as their membership dues. Members get four parties a year with free pours and some food for their dues at the parties. They also get two Ice Tea Parties, of the Long Island variety, on the last Saturday of Spring SOS and Fall SOS.

You can become an associate member in our club in two ways. One way is to be a member of an ACSC affiliated club. We recently changed our by-laws to make all members in good standing with another ACSC member club an associate member of the Palmetto Shag Club. Since PSC sponsors a weekend party that many other ACSC clubs' members attend, we did this to eliminate the problem of income from outside sources exceeding the federal limits for taxation.

The other way to become an associate member is to pay an associate membership fee of \$25 a year. This gives the associate member 1 free party. They would then pay a party fee of \$25 per party. After 2 parties, they can become full members if they so choose.

Associate members are not allowed to vote at club meetings, but are encouraged to attend the meetings and take part in the discussions.

The club also sponsors other events for our members for which we charge a fee. This gives us a chance to do things that some of our members enjoy, like annual bus trips to shag with other nearby clubs, usually in the summer, annual New Years Eve Party, and special functions like our Southern Comfort Park & Party and DJ Marathon at the Corner Pocket.

Shag Clubs in the Columbia area are fortunate to have two places where they can go to dance weekly. On Friday nights we dance at The Corner Pocket in Columbia, SC and on Thursday nights we dance in downtown Columbia at Jillian's in the Vista. Both the Corner Pocket and Jillian's occasionally have bands for us to enjoy.

Let me tell you about a couple of our recent challenges.

- A few years ago our membership declined significantly due to drama in the club. Our membership had been well over 300 members only a few years before the decline. This was an obvious strain on our budget. We had to increase membership or eliminate some of our

parties. Through a concerted effort to eliminate the drama and make it fun again, we were able to bring our membership back up to a level that would allow us to sustain all of our activities.

- In late November of last year we had another challenge. PSC learned that we were going to lose our regular party venue at Woodman of the World because they could no longer allow alcoholic beverages to be served in their facility. We have had our parties there since 2009. This forced us to find a new venue for our parties. We had to check out numerous places to find one that would work for us – a little unneeded stress - but it all worked out. We think we have found one that will work for us going forward. Expect bumps in the road.

I mentioned earlier that we have two places that we dance on a weekly basis. So, what does the rest of our calendar look like?

- **Valentine's Party** - Our first party of the calendar year is our Valentine's Party. This party is in February near

Valentine's Day. This year Valentine's Day falls on a Saturday so our party is actually on Valentine's Day, February 14th.

- **Member Appreciation Party** - Our Member Appreciation Party is our second party of the year and is usually in April. This party is held in recognition of our members and gives us the opportunity to thank all our members for their continued support of our club.
- **SOS Spring Safari** - At SOS Spring Safari we enter a float in the parade. Some members bring shooters and snacks to share while we get ready for the parade. This is a time of fun and camaraderie. It also helps build our core club.
- **Southern Comfort Park & Party** - This will be our 18th Southern Comfort. Southern Comfort XVIII will be at a new venue this year. We are moving the party to the Double Tree by Hilton. This will allow us to put back in place an old tradition of an outdoor pool party that we could not do at the Embassy Suites. This party brings

together over 20 shag clubs and around 400 people to have a wonderful time. We have a large wood dance floor, hospitality suites, split the pot drawings, line dance lessons, shag lessons and great association DJs. This party will be the weekend after Memorial Day on May 29 & 30.

- **Annual Bus Trip** – During the summer time, our members love to take a bus trip to a nearby club every year. We try to schedule it around other summer events so the date changes every year. It is usually on a Friday or Saturday evening. The cost of the bus ride is only \$20, so this is a popular event. We make this fun by members bringing shooters and snacks to share, so the ride up is a party.
- **Re-Up Party** - Our Re-Up Party is usually in August. This is the time we collect dues for the new PSC membership year that runs August 1 – July 31. So this is considered our first party of the new membership year.

- **SOS Fall Migration** – On the last Saturday of SOS Fall Migration we have another Long Island Ice Tea party.
- **Party at the Pocket** - In October or November when the Gamecocks have an open date, we try to schedule a special Saturday night event at our Friday night dance club, The Corner Pocket. Last year we had a DJ Marathon and raised about \$1500 for the American Cancer Society. This year the date will be October 24th. We are planning to have another DJ Marathon for that party.
- **Thankmus Party** - In late November or early December we have a party that we call our Thankmus Party. The name derives from combining a party to celebrate both Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- **New Year's Eve Party** - On New Year's Eve we have a Park and Party at one of the local hotels. The club sponsors the party, but it is open to all our associate members from the other ACSC clubs and sponsored guests. We typically charge a nominal fee for our full members and a little more for our associate members

and guests. This past year the fees were \$25 and \$35 respectively.

One of the things we do to make all our regular parties more fun is to have a theme for the party. As an example, we have used a Mardi Grass, Cinco de Mayo, and Lake Murray Days themes recently.

Charitable Contributions

We also donate to our favorite charities every year. This past year we made donations to the Ellen Taylor Foundation, the Wounded Warriors Foundation, the American Cancer Society, the Harvest Hope Food Bank and a few smaller donations to others.

Recommendations for New Presidents

In closing, let me make just a few recommendations for you new presidents. You have all probably heard the words before that “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Well , I’m here to tell you that is the dumbest thing I have ever

heard. Let me tell you why. If you do the same old things all the time, you are going to decline. Having some traditions is a good thing, but don't let tradition be a straight jacket. It is my experience that you are either moving forward or backwards. I would tell you that if it ain't broke, good. Make it better. Constantly look for new ideas or new ways to improve your club. Take risks for your clubs sake. Try new things. Implement new ideas. But I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

- **Put First Things First:** Read your A.C.S.C. Reference Manual from cover to cover. There is a lot of information in it that will help you as a new president. Get familiar with Shagdance.com. Review the President's Corner. Get familiar with the SOS Facebook page. Don't be afraid to call other Presidents to get ideas. Go to parties that other clubs sponsor to see what they are doing.
- **Don't be afraid to try new ideas or activities:** I will give you a couple of examples:

When my wife Susan and I went to the 2012 ACSC Summer Workshop in Jacksonville, FL hosted by First Coast Shag Club, we learned that no one had offered a bid to host the 2014 ACSC Winter Workshop. We spoke with Helen Still about it and she informed us that the bid was supposed to be made at the workshop we were attending. Susan and I discussed it and then I called the hotel where we had our Southern Comfort Park & Party to see if the dates were available and if they would be willing to work with us on securing the party. After we got the hotel on board, we went to our club President and asked if he had a problem with our club submitting a bid. He indicated that it was OK with him. With his approval in hand, we spoke with Ken Aiken about submitting a bid. He told us that since no one else was bidding, we could make our proposal at the SOS Fall Migration meeting. We bid on and won a workshop for the first time in our history and held one of the best ACSC Workshops ever in February 2014.

In order to make it easier to work with our financials we adopted an online accounting system called

Kashoo Online Accounting. This has made it possible for our board members and financial auditor to view information when they choose online. It also eliminated the need to have a club owned computer and printer that would have to be maintained and software updated every year.

- **Set Up a PayPal System:** We set up a PayPal system on our website as a way to pay our dues and for special events with PayPal, a credit card or a debit card. This was a suggestion we picked up at a previous session like this one from David Bushey of the NVSC.
- **Create a Club Business Card:** We also created a club business card, another suggestion we adopted from the NVSC.
- **Create a System to Get Ladies to Dance:** We use “Ask Me to Dance” name tags at parties and other events to encourage people to dance, especially for singles.

- **Create a Weekly E-mail:** We e-mail “Shag Notes” every week to keep our members informed about what’s going on in the shag world.
- **Create Monthly Newsletter:** We publish a monthly newsletter and put it on our website and e-mail it to our members. This keeps them informed about that’s going on in the club and other opportunities to dance.
- **Review By-Laws:** We review our by-laws every year and update them based on new information or practices. As a result, we recently stopped issuing membership cards and created an Associate Membership as a new membership option.
- **Be Nice, Be Friendly, Be Welcoming:** We believe it is everyone’s responsibility to be nice, friendly, and welcoming to everyone at our parties and other events including our weekly dance clubs, not just our

officers. Our officers however are supposed to set the example.

- **Create a Website:** I know this might sound silly to some of you, but if you don't have a website, create one. Keep it current and informative. Some other clubs use Facebook, but we don't. It is a big commitment to keep it updated, but if you have someone that is willing to do it, it can be a great tool to keep people informed and to get feedback.
- **Create an Annual Budget:** Our by-laws now require the president of our club to create an annual budget by the first board meeting so that the board can approve it. Then, every board meeting it is updated showing actuals vs budget. This helps you to be a good steward of the club's money. Revisions to the budget are made as required. Sometimes things change or come up that were not in the original budget. A budget is not meant to be a straight jacket. It is a living document that can be changed as needed.

I would like to thank you for your time and let you know that I would be happy to answer any questions. Just give me a call or send me an e-mail.

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