

Friday night was very special in Greenwood, South Carolina. Surprisingly, John McElrath was genuinely surprised when two well-known area politicians came on stage with a proclamation sent directly from the Governor of South Carolina. In an age of tongue slips, mass forwarding of emails etc. etc. John appeared to have no idea that he was about to receive South Carolina's highest civilian recognition, The Order of The Palmetto. The Order of The Palmetto is not something that is handed out on an everyday basis. I am not sure all the qualifications for the award but if they include characteristics of individuals who possess integrity, loyalty, persistence and passion, then it didn't take the Governor long to determine that John deserved the recognition. You could see hundreds of lumps forming in the collective throats of hundreds as Mr. Swingin' Medallion received the proclamation. It was the highlight in a night of highlights. Several including yours truly got to address the 600 or 700 hundred that has assembled in Greenwood South Carolina's Civic Center.

The stories and experiences that others had with John and the band were interesting and heartwarming to hear. In describing John and his influence on the band, former Medallion sax man and now Hollywood actor Grainger Hines used the description in "The Heeey Baby Days of Beach Music' to describe John's lasting effect on the band:

"The Swingin' Medallions have always been led by a man quick to point out the greatness of others. John McElrath has been the glue keeping all the moving parts together."

Rockin' Dave Roddy recanted his early promoting experiences with the band. the same great story he shared in the book.

Another interesting and humorous story told by the band's first banker was a hoot. It was hard to believe but typical that many band's no doubt had back in the day. Seems like all bands were having their transportation problems. That was perhaps confounded for a larger band like the Medallions. He ended his story by telling about the time the band's Flexible bus finally died in Folkston, Georgia. At that point, I knew the banker was authentic because of the memories I had in the late 60s of passing through Folkston on the way to Fernandina Beach (many times) and seeing that familiar bus sitting next to the Ford Dealership with "Double Shot" still identifying the eventual destination. I am sure there are some people out there that will tell you that the Swingin' Medallions were from Folkston, Georgia rather than Greenwood, South Carolina.

It was a grand time last Friday night in Greenwood, South Carolina, the home of the Swingin' Medallions. Never seen so many saxophones onstage at one time. It was a fitting tribute to the cofounder and leader of the South's party band!