



## **“BIG GEORGE” LINEBERRY (1987)**

“When I first went to “the beach” in 1945, “Big George” was there and was called “Big George” for the same reason he would be called that today. He was large compared to all of us skinny teenagers, but he could just as easily have been called “Smiley” because a smile is one thing he has never been without. Friendly with the old beach bums and just as nice to the newly-arrived and to the tourists.

The beginning Beach Bums looked up to George because he was “King of the Beach” and they tried to copy his dancing style – a style that was developing then into what today is called “The Shag” but then was “The Jitterbug”. A crowd always gathered and his followers “passed the hat” for jukebox money (some of which actually made its way to the jukebox).

The fraternity of beach people of that era will always consider those the “good old days” and even though “Big George” left Myrtle Beach to make his fortune in Virginia Beach, our nostalgic thoughts will give us that good feeling again, the feeling of belonging when we were considered part of George’s crowd.

Myrtle Beach of today is not like it was then but we liked it the way it was and we were doing exactly as we wanted. There was a lot of activity day and night and one of the neat things was that no decision was made until we found out what “Big George” was going to do because that would determine where that crowd would be.

Consider that all this occurred about 40 years ago and one can see the strength of the friendships that developed then and still endure. I still consider it a privilege to be counted among “Big George’s” large circle of friends. At the SOS reunions we’ve been having the last few years, it was a big pleasure to note that everyone remembered that “Big George” reigned back then as “King of the Beach”.

-Burt Bennett (BSNHOF, 1995)

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Bo Bryan writes<sup>1</sup> of “Big George” Lineberry:

*“...Within a short time (Chicken) Hicks met a stout white kid from central North Carolina who was equally agile at jumping the rope<sup>2</sup>, “Big George” Lineberry. Together, they were fated to play unsung roles in the earliest days of the rock revolution. The legend of the Shag recounts:*

*In the late spring of 1943, Chicken and Big George decided to hitchhike to Myrtle Beach. They were young and broke, and one of them was looking for a job. Big George found work with Johnny Burroughs, the man at the beach who controlled many of the coin operated vending machines and jukeboxes. Lineberry stayed in Myrtle Beach for the next several years. Coin machines and jukeboxes became the source of his lifelong vocation and future financial success. He was industrious and good with his hands, but his glamour was all in his feet.*

*Along the waterfront in downtown Myrtle Beach, bowling alley and amusement entrepreneurs gave him free food regularly to come and dance at their jukebox locations. His boss, Johnny Burroughs, listened when Lineberry suggested they shift some of the music from black juke joints to the white pavilions. Many black recordings, via Lineberry, wound up on the Wurlitzers and Seeburgs downtown. Before long, the jukeboxes in Myrtle Beach were inundated with forbidden rhythm. The rock revolution and the legend of the Shag were set to orbit for a while on parallel courses. The seeds of beach music were sown.”*

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan, Bo. [Shag: The Legendary Dance of the South](#), Sheriar Press, Myrtle Beach, SC, 1995, page 35. [ISBN 0-9648084-0-4](#)

<sup>2</sup> “Jumping the (Jim Crowe) rope” refers to white people that crossed the early color segregation barrier of the South to associate with black people and study their dancing from the balconies of the segregated black clubs and emulate what they saw, dancing at beach clubs that played rhythm & blues or “race” music as it was known at the time.