

The Highway Beautification Committee recommends to the Monroe County Commission the Logo System be adapted throughout the county as an equitable and economic way to inform visitors and residents of businesses available in the county.

Logo signs are standard throughout the United States. Each sign is approximately 9 foot by 9 foot, is blue and white and contains space for many 2 foot x 2 foot business signs or logos.. The entire sign is placed and controlled by DOT, will look uniform and aesthetically acceptable and save space. Off-highway particularly will benefit from this system, as one sign can advertise many businesses.

Further equitability is realized as greenbelt areas will remain so while areas of concentrated gas stations, restaurants, hotels, etc., will also contain the highest concentration of signage. Business will be assuming the responsibility of advertising in their own area.

The HBC further recommends that a Florida Keys Information Center be developed and staffed in Key Largo, where brochures, maps of all business enterprises can be displayed. Also, Wayside directory stands should be established where appropriate and applicable: In the wayside park near MM 80, on Big Pine near the Post Office, in Marathon in the parks by the airport.. The Wayside Directories and the Tourist Information Centers should be paid for from TDC funds. If Key West feels it needs a Tourist Information Center out near the new Hampton Inn, it should also have one, since no one can find their present Hospitality House.

This report from the Chairman of Roadside Development for the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs District XII. Betty B. Wilson, who also serves on the Monroe County Highway Beautification Committee, whose members are appointed by the county commissioners. These are excerpts from talks given before the Upper Keys Chamber of Commerce at Key Largo, when Mrs. Wilson presented the Chamber with a check for \$500.00 donated by the Upper Keys Garden Club of Tavernier, toward beautification of the median strip project. Mrs. Wilson also spoke before the U.K. Garden Club last Tuesday reporting on the progress of the M.C. H.B.H.B.C.:

About three weeks ago two D.O.T. engineers called us to gather a group of Upper Keys people together for a meeting at the Frances Tracy Garden Center, M.M. 94, to get our input on their newly drawn plans for additional planting of trees along the edge of their right-away. These would conform to their guidelines and funds have been set aside for plantings similar to this along all of the new highway areas down to Key West. This is not a part of the Median Strip Project. Mile Marker 106 down to 92.5 is set to be done in June of this year. The tree groupings will be protected by federal and state and removed under penalty of law.

Now, about the care of the plantings in the median strip at present. Perhaps you have noticed that grass and weeds have grown up around them, making them unsightly and causing the shrubs to struggle to grow. We spoke to Mr. McAllister about D.O.T. using their crews from Big Pine Key to care for these plantings, but it seems that it is difficult for them to get their men that far north...too bad for the Upper Keys!

I called Commissioner John Stormont about this problem, and asked if a man from the county road department could go out with a weed eater and keep these areas cleared, and the head of that department is trying to re-arrange things so that they can help us on that problem. Many studies have been in the works for the H.B.C. the past few months: About nine months ago every member of the committee conducted a survey of the Billboards on U.S. 1 in Monroe County. We covered every sign, checking for permits and licenses, wading through weeds and dense undergrowth to get to many of these. It was a tremendous task, and what we found should make every citizen of Monroe County grimace. The latest license that we found was for 1977, but most of the signs were only licensed through 1973-74. Someone really slipped up there, just think of all the licensing fees that could have been collected. Several of the new steel signs did not have a building permit posted nor a license. A few of these, "steel monstrosities" were put up by the Legg Co. and hurried to get their permits during the two month interum last year before the moratorium on sign boards went into effect. Some of the new signboards were replacing old signboards without a new permit. Did you know that most of the billboards in the Keys do not conform to our building code, and would be a hazard in a time of a severe

wind storm. Also have you ever noticed that most of the billboards in the Upper Keys are advertising Marathon or Key West?

We do not want any local merchant or businesses of any kind to suffer by the removal of billboards, that is why the H.B.C. recommended to the Monroe County Commissioners that the Logo System be adopted throughout the county, as an equitable and economic way to inform both our residents and visitors alike of the businesses that are available in each area.

Logo signs are standard throughout the United States. Each sign is approx. 9'x9', is blue and white, and contains space for many 2'x2' business signs or logos. The entire sign is placed and controlled by D.O.T., will look uniform and aesthetically acceptable and save space. Off highway business will also benefit from this system, as one sign can advertise many businesses.

The H.B.C. further recommends that a Florida Information Center be developed and staffed in Key Largo using T.D.C. funds where brochures, maps of all business enterprises can be displayed...also along wayside directory stands established where appropriate and applicable. Some of these ideas are mentioned in the Land Use Plan.

According to David Etheridge, editor of *Florida Keys Magazine*, "The root question here is how big a hit the county treasury will take to purchase the 400 billboards". Did you know that there is still almost 9 million dollars held in Federal Trust Funds for removal of illegal and non-conforming billboards, and of that sum there is still over \$800,000 in Florida's share of funds that we can apply for. But...we must adopt an ordinance to be eligible for these funds, even if they went for the expense of a referendum we must still have an ordinance.

John Stormont, who always seems to be prepared, has been studying many of the **Billboard Ordinances** now being used in other counties of Florida and other states all over the U.S. A few weeks ago he called the H.B.C. members to his office, and we came from all over the Keys, for the reading of his proposed ordinance. The U.S. Supreme Court and virtually all state courts have found that the aesthetic interest in community appearance...either alone or when linked with non-aesthetic public purposes...such as traffic safety, property values, or tourism, is of sufficient government interest to support and help to remove these signs.

Did you know that last year there was a federal survey of states based on "aesthetic quality" *Florida rated the 10th ugliest*...because of the surplus of off-property billboards. Quoting again from David Ethridge, "...we elect our officials to lead...and taking such an issue as billboards to referendum shows neither leadership nor political courage.

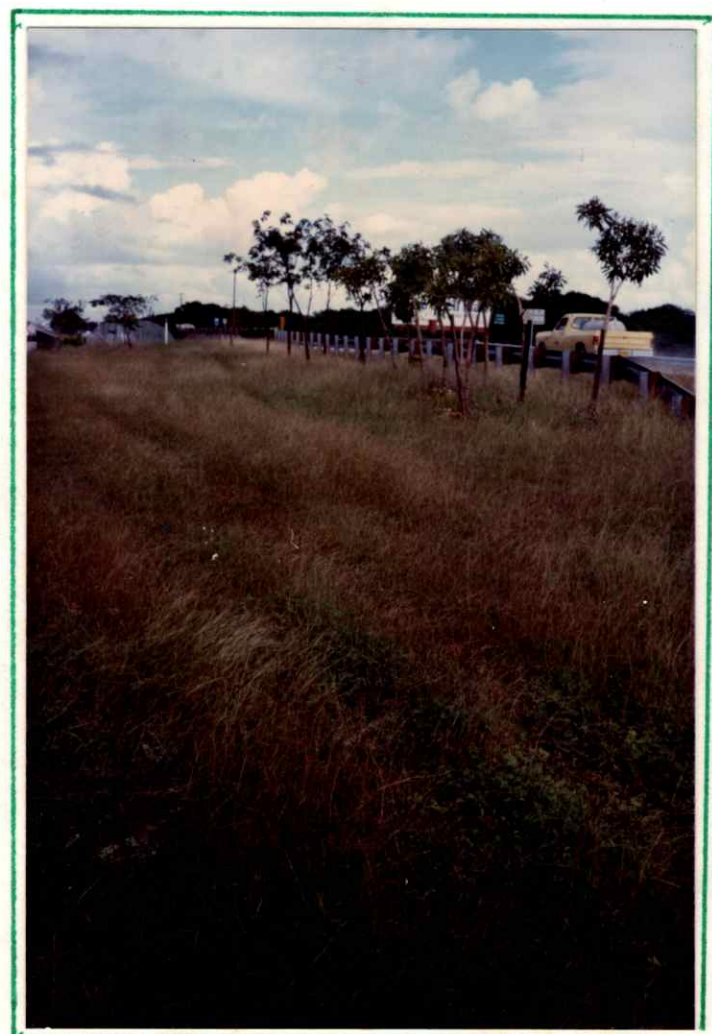
What the H.B.C. has endeavored to do is: to see that the 106 miles of Overseas Highway, *Our String of Pearls*, be cleaned up, so that we can be designated one of the "Great scenic highways of America"...and then we can all be proud that we have contributed toward this designation!

Betty B. Wilson



Highway Beautification mm 106 to mm 93

SOUND OFF



Highway Beautification
Plantings 1985
mm 106 to mm 93

I'm sure most of us cannot understand why our county is so concerned about keeping our "Keys" beautiful, for which I am grateful and in 100% agreement, yet they continue to allow unsightly billboards. Most of these have been erected by Miami billboard companies, not even at the request of a local advertiser, but simply with a sign saying "This Space Available". Did they run out of spaces in Miami and think the Keys were an easy prey? Apparently and unfortunately they were right!

AUGUST 14, 1986 THE REPORTER PAGE 3

I was surprised at your pro-stand for eyesore and view-blocking billboards in the Florida Keys. Businesses can put up large, attractive signs on their places of business. They can advertise in newspapers, on radio and television and the best advertisement of all, word of mouth.