

tion" speed bumps rippled under your tires, the "beginning of construction" barriers loomed and it was time to get off again.

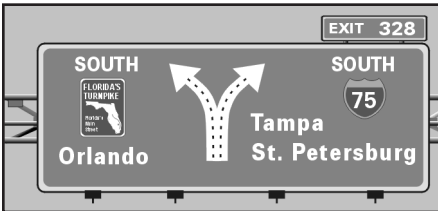
But back to *Wildwood*. In the 1960s, it was a small community. We stayed in an old 1950s style motor court and to my horror when we opened our front door to our first Florida morning...our car, a Volkswagen Bug, was covered with ice!

Ice in Florida? Nobody had told me about this possibility and our ice scraper was back in the North. Luckily, I had my *Chargex* card (an early form of *Visa*) and so put it to use taking the ice off the windshield in curling slivers. Like most frosty Floridian mornings, it warmed up as we left *Wildwood* and with windows opened, we soon smelt the aromatic sweetness of orange blossoms as we motored down the FTP. *Wildwood* will always bring these long past magical moments to my mind.

#### **Exit 328-Florida's Turnpike junction:**

Southbound—until now, we have been driving in 3 lanes from the Georgia Border. From here to mile 265, we will be on a 2 lane I-75 stretch. If you are continuing on I-75 South, stay or move to traffic lanes L2 or L3.

If heading onto the FTP South for *Kissimmee* and *Orlando*, or the Atlantic coastline south of *Fort Pierce*, move to L1 (which leaves I-75 at this point) or L2 which splits between the FTP and I-75.



The FTP is a toll route. To give you some idea of cost, a passenger car traveling from here to I-4 (Kissimmee/Orlando) will pay \$3; if heading to *Ft Lauderdale*, the cost is \$17.20. FTP—go to map 175, FTP Notes, page 113.

Northbound—there is no northbound I-75 exit 328. For some reason, the engineers didn't think anyone driving north would want to switch to the FTP...hence, no exit. If you do want to join the FTP, the best advice is to go off at exit 329 (one mile above the south-

bound FTP exit)—turn around and come back on I-75 south, to exit 329.

If you are continuing to drive north on I-75, I have good news. From here to the Georgia Border, it's 3 lanes and 70 mph all the way.

**Mile 322-The Lost City:** Look around you. We are surrounded by wetlands...the home of *alligators*, *water moccasin*, *egrets* and *heron*...*swampy wetland* where the *hardwood hammock* is the only solid ground.

It's hard to imagine that this was once the site of a bustling city, twice the size of *Jacksonville*. An 1800s *Florida Gazetteer* shows that this growing metropolis was a key station on the *Florida Central Railroad* and a major shipping point for the area's cypress timber and citrus industries.

Boasting a city hall, parks, churches, schools and hotels, *Panasoffkee* as it was called, was not only known as the "orange capital of the world." With a population in the thousands, it was heading to be "the largest city of peninsula Florida" but the City Fathers desperately needed a new source of funds to continue.

A group of influential New York bankers were invited to visit *Panasoffkee*, to decide whether to invest in the town's rapid growth. But on the very morning their train arrived—so did the hard freeze of March, 1883, with its driving sleet and plummeting temperatures. When the investors saw the ruined crops and broken, ice-covered trees, they couldn't get back on the warm train quickly enough! Sunny Florida? Hah!

So *Panasoffkee* did not get its much needed capital to expand. Slowly people moved away, the industry died and Nature took over. And that's why, when you look around today, all you see is *swampy wetland* and *hardwood hammock*...with *alligators*, *water moccasin*, *egrets* and *heron*.

Let's cross the *Florida Veteran's Memorial Bridge* and continue our interstate drive to the warmer climes of the south.

**Exit 314-Dade Battlefield:** If the single musket shot echoing across *Lexington's Green* in 1775, was the "shot heard around the world," then the sudden crash of guns which rang out here early on a December morning in 1835,

*WILDWOOD* - long before the town, a telegraph line was being strung here when the crew ran out of wire. They telegraphed back for supplies heading their telegram, "location - wild wood."

PANASOFFKEE - the name of a long gone Indian village from the Seminole "pani" ("valley") and "sufki" ("deep").