



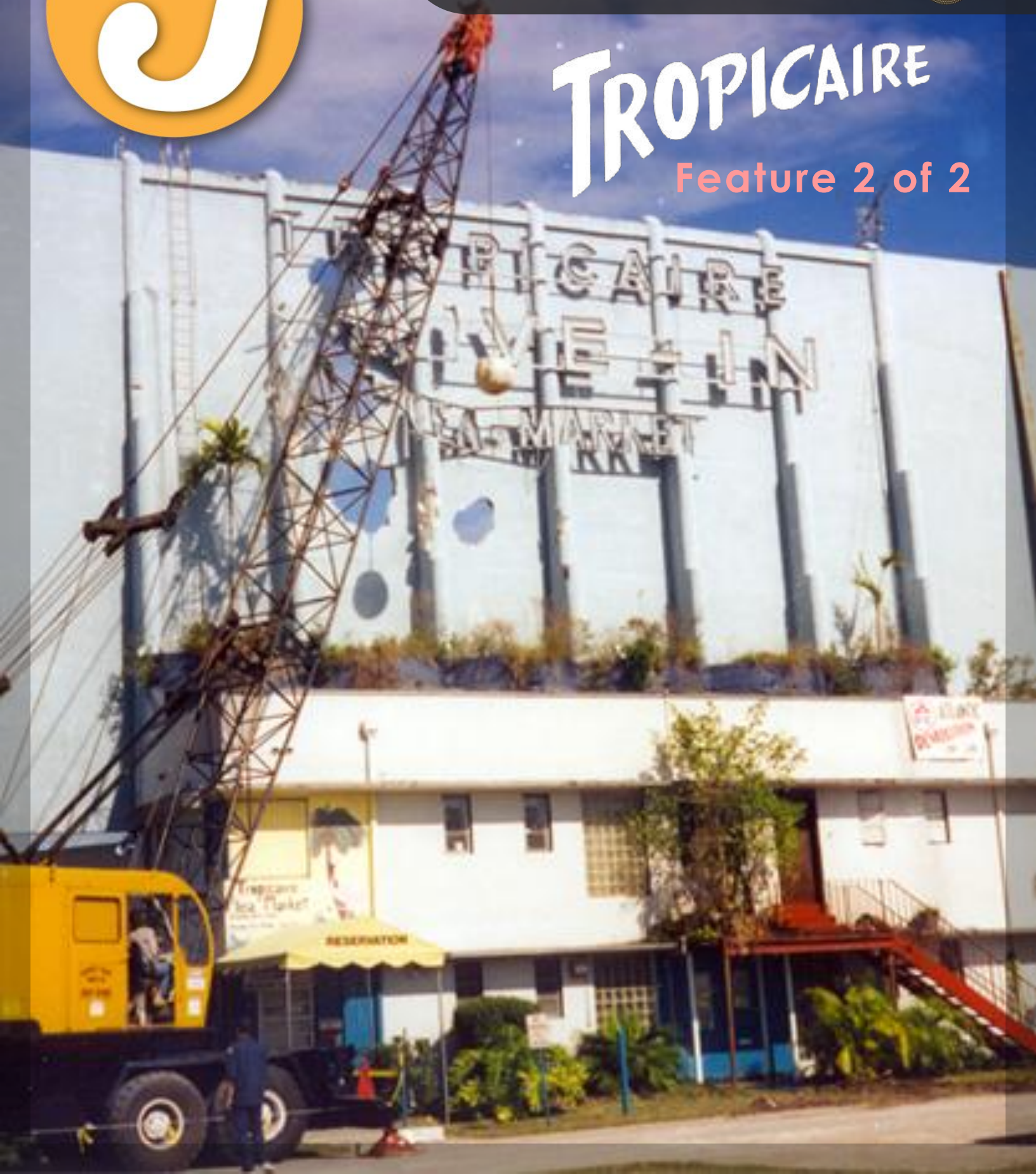
de Stolfe Journal

13.SPECIAL-2 : TROPICAIRE, 1949-1994



# TROPICAIRE

Feature 2 of 2



# CONTENTS

## 13.SPECIAL-2 : TROPICAIRE, 1949-1994

*(Page numbers correspond to the PDF page numbers.)*

- 2** ... Contents & On The Cover
- 3** ... Comments by RG
- 4-12** ... Demolition
- 13-18** ... Tropicaire Center
- 19-21** ... Timeline Comparison
- 22-26** ... Personal Recollections
- 27-34** ... Tangential Things
- 35-44** ... Dixie Drive-In Theatre
- 45** ... Final Thought
- 45** ... The Fine Print

## ON THE COVER



*The Tropicaire Drive-In was torn down on December 28, 1994 after a brief ceremony and catered meal.*



*This is called Farm Stores. I remember this place fondly as it was where we got our containers of ice cream! Read more about this place later in this issue of the journal.*

We live in the 2020s, not the 1920s! Wherever there is a web link like below, click it to go to the webpage it references! (Click it now!)

[www.destolfe.com](http://www.destolfe.com)



# COMMENTS BY RG

## Tropicaire... was home!

Well, it took me a little while to get back to it after some life changes (more on that in future regular issues), but here is the second half and completion of the story about the Tropicaire Drive-In Theatre along with a short history of the Dixie Drive-In Theatre. As I mentioned in the first half, it was 30 years ago when the Tropicaire was torn down to be replaced by a “Key West style” shopping center. The original process started in 1987, but it was not until 1994 before it finally happened, a full seven years later. The official ceremony took place with a brief speech and a catered meal on Wednesday, December 28, 1994. I was in town at the time visiting Dad for Christmas and New Years.

This issue picks up from the previous special issue straight into the day of demolition and various things surrounding that process. The topics then continue to the finished shopping center, the Tropicaire Center, which Dad revisited in 2016. I also include some comparison photos of the land and recall some details from when I lived in the theatre. Beyond that, I also go off on some tangents telling about some related things before going into a not as long history of the Dixie Drive-In Theatre. I am certain that

I have probably been to the Dixie at least once in my life as there was an approximate overlap of eight years before it was torn down. But it is just as likely that I would have been too young to remember.

In other news, I am debating how I want to tackle the next several issues as I had planned to have at least two other issues out before the end of 2024, not including new issues in 2025, that I had started but never finished. Besides that, some changes have happened with me in recent weeks that will take some effort to explain. So, I am likely going to retroactively get those other issues done, then cover recent activities in a first 2025 issue later.

So with that, I hope you enjoy this second half of the Tropicaire!

RG



*Palm tree from the Tropicaire.*

# DEMOLITION



# DEMOLITION

The largest obstacle to building the new shopping center was the theatre building and screen. From late 1992 through 1994, whatever things that needed working out apparently got worked out, and by 1994, the go ahead to build the shopping center went forward. Dad had to move out of the second floor of the building where we lived since circa 1970, nearly 25 years. I think he did this during the summer or early fall of 1994. In July and August, I went on my extended studies trip to Flagstaff, as I covered in the recent special issue this last August. He moved into a condo, a single floor end unit with a small side and back yard located in Miramar of

Broward County, Florida. This was just over the state line from Dade County and very close to Joe Robbie Stadium where the Miami Dolphins were based. An official ceremony took place midday on Wednesday, December 28, 1994. I was in town visiting Dad for Christmas and New Year, and it worked out for me to be there for the ceremony. Dad and I arrived there a good bit early as he also was tasked to take photos of the event. We went inside our old house, as I called it, well prior to the ceremony to get one last look of the place and to get a few photos. Dad left behind a lot of random stuff that he apparently did not want

or need. I did grab a few things I wanted to keep. One of the stranger things I took were some vinyl vertical blinds that were in front of the living room windows. I took them back to Jacksonville where I put them in front of the

dining room windows, where they stayed for at least another decade until I took them down and finally threw them away. (I just liked vertical blinds, and there was nothing wrong with them.)



*This was our kitchen. Yes, a blue kitchen. The range was probably original to the building, the late 1940s! The cabinets only went along the outer wall and a few upper cabinets above the range. This small room contained a range, washing machine, fridge, and portable dishwasher!*



*This was part of the living room the day of the demolition. The dining room was past the arch. Dad liked yellow walls for some reason.*



*This was my bedroom, or more specifically, this was the full bedroom. Growing up, about half of the room was walled off for storage, and I had the part on the right side. A year or two later after I moved away, Dad took down the wall to make the whole room into a photography studio, with remnants here.*

# DEMOLITION



*The photos on these pages were scanned from a proof sheet of photos that Dad took and made. That is why the photos are contrasty and blurry. These photos were taken weeks before the official demolition ceremony, probably in December of 1994.*



# DEMOLITION



*I find it funny that while razing and clearing out everything else in the area, they left a lone palm tree for the remaining days of the flea market!*



# DEMOLITION

The ceremony and short speech by Mr. Ogden included a catered meal with actual dishes and silverware and glasses under a tent placed safely to the side of the front near the Mary's Carpets building. Prior to that, the electricity was disconnected with the power line removed, and the wrecking ball crane was set in place. The ceremony had the usual speech, thanks, and accolades, and whatever, I don't really remember. He did give Mr. McComas a pair of the drive in speakers so he could "listen in stereo"! The wrecking ball was concrete and was painted gold. The crane operator had to swing a few times to get into the correct momentum. But once he got going, the gold ball hit against the screen and just went thud and

bounced off! Ha, ha! Everyone had a good laugh! They tried a few more times and all that happened was to make ball sized holes in the thinner part of the screen making it look like Swiss cheese! I'm not really sure what people expected to happen with a wrecking ball hitting the building if the building survived a category 5 hurricane! But whatever!

Eventually, someone had the idea to take the bulldozer to the lower part of the building instead. That was immediately much more effective. Some of the first things they did were to pull out the palm tree in the corner (which was one of my favorite palm trees, by the way) and to pull off the stairs to the second floor, and to take the



*Tropicaire Drive-In Theatre: 1949-1987.  
Tropicaire Drive-In Flea Market: 1962-1994.*



*Mr. Ogden was the developer who bought the Tropicaire property to build the shopping center.*



*Earlier in the day prior to the ceremony.*



*The first successful swing against the wall.*

# DEMOLITION



*The wrecking ball was not very effective in that it mostly bounced off the wall and just made Swiss cheese of the wall!*



*Bounce!*



*The dozer made much more efficient progress.*

# DEMOLITION

flea market canopy off the other side of the first floor. Then, they attacked the building itself. The bulldozer slammed into the glass block wall for specific people to grab some glass blocks. Dad grabbed a few, and we each had some (Dad, Mom, and me). They started attacking the right side of the building on the end where my parent's bedroom was (on the second floor). Dad's heavy metal desk fell over to the ground from the second floor. For the main building, the bulldozer had no issue quickly tearing down most of the walls.

By this point, the ceremony itself was over and the caterers

cleaned up and left and most of the other people left. Dad and I left after a little while to go do something, I don't remember what, and we drove past the theatre afterwards to see how much more they got torn down. At the point when we passed by, they had reached to where my bedroom was, and I could see that they had about half of my bedroom torn down. I could see my closet and the outside wall where my window was. Needless to say, I was rather sad for the rest of the day to see the first place where I had ever lived being violently torn apart. A few days later, we went back to the site to find that almost all of the

structure was gone except for some of the crumbled pilasters that held the screen wall and piles of the many pieces of large rebar that each pilaster had in them!

The two metal supports of the wind extensions were also laying on the ground. It was not long after when I went back to Jacksonville.



*One of the glass blocks from the Tropicaire building, installed circa 1948-1949.*



*After several days, this is all that was left of the drive-in theatre that stood for 45 years.*

# DEMOLITION

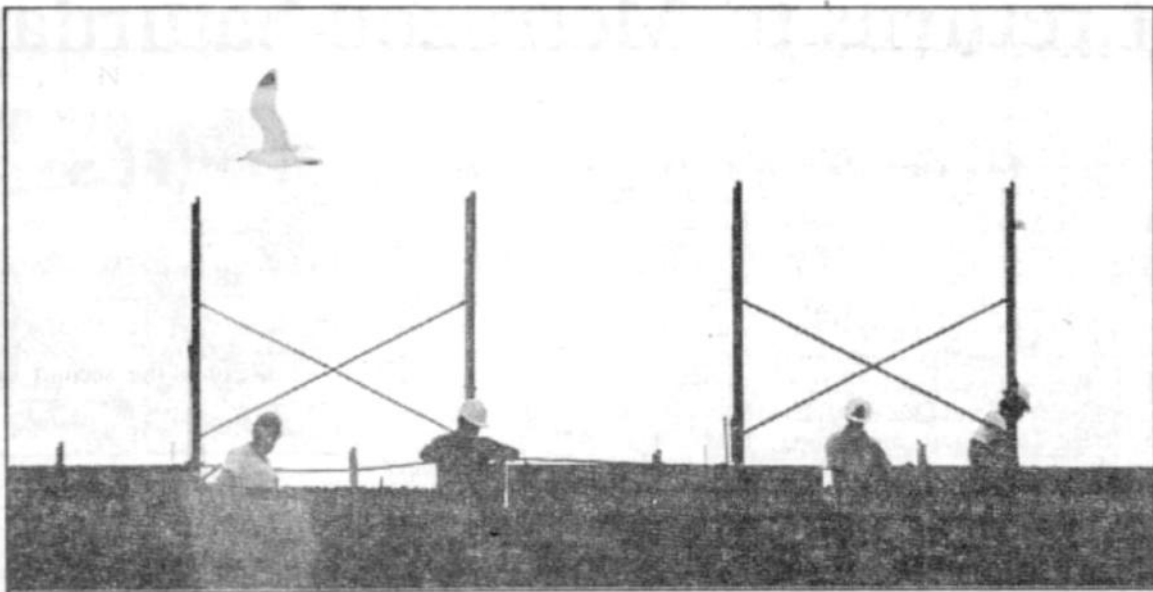
## A MEMENTO

Fernando Fernandez Garcia salvages scrap aluminum from the remains of the Tropicaire Drive-In Theater and Flea Market on Wednesday. The theater and flea market had stood at 7751 SW 40th St. since the 1940s. It was torn down to make room for a shopping center.



AL DIAZ / Herald Staff

*The Miami Herald. Sunday, November 27, 1994. Page 83.*



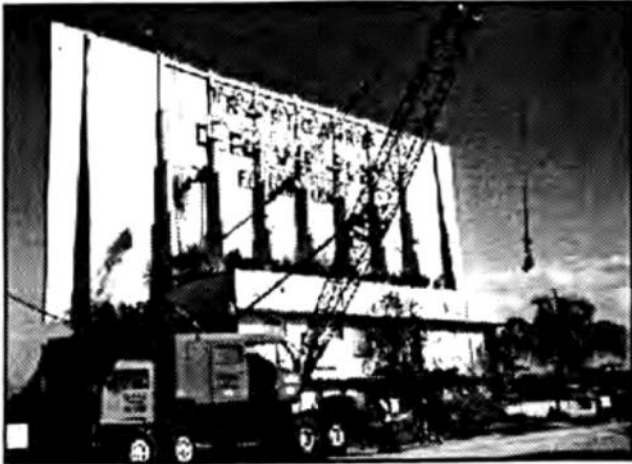
PETER ANDREW BOSCH / Herald Staff

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

Block by block, workers put up the new Best Buy store at the Tropicaire Center, once the home of the Tropicaire flea market on Bird Road just off the Palmetto Expressway.

*How amazing to capture a seagull in mid flight!  
The Miami Herald. Thursday, February 23, 1995. Page 9.*

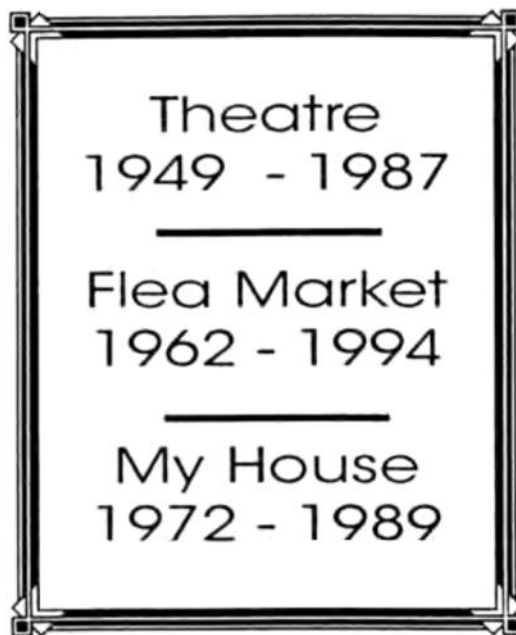
# DEMOLITION



*Tropicaire Drive-in Theatre before*



*Tropicaire Drive-in Theatre 2 days later*



## Tropicaire Drive-In: Theatre and Flea Market

Robert-George de Stolfe

On Wednesday, December 28, 1994, the Tropicaire Drive-in Flea market came to an end. In a ceremony around noon, the theatre/ flea market was honored with a fully catered tearing down ceremony. After speakings for about a half an hour, the crane with a gold-painted, concrete ball was reved up and started as shown in the before picture. During the teardown, people ate and reporters took notes and recordings. For some it was a sad day while for others it was a day of progress. The after photo shows the "progress" two days later. 🌀

*From de Stolfe Journal, Summer-Fall 1995*

*What started as a project in 1987 to quickly buy the Tropicaire property and turn it into a "Key West style" shopping center that would start in "six months" ultimately took about seven years before actually happening in late 1994!*

*On Wednesday, December 28, 1994, the Tropicaire Drive-In Flea Market came to an end. In a ceremony around noon, the theatre/ flea market was honored with a fully catered tearing down ceremony. After speakings for about a half an hour, the crane with a gold painted concrete ball was reved up and started as shown in the before photo. During the teardown, people ate and reporters took notes and recordings. For some, it was a sad day while for others it was a day of progress. The after photo shows the "progress" two days later. 🌀*

# TROPICAIRE CENTER



# TROPICAIRE CENTER

Even before the main theatre building was torn down, the developers had already started tearing out the other parts of the land and smoothing it out. About a third to a half of the land was already smoothed out by the time of the ceremony at the end of December. Dad got some photos in the days or weeks prior to the ceremony. Through 1995, the shopping center got built and other areas were retooled with basically no trace of the previous drive in theatre

that remained. Where the theatre was became part of the large parking lot and was just off the southwest corner of the new Best Buy building. I would not get to Miami and see the land again until 1999 when I drove from Flagstaff to Jacksonville in my recently bought truck. Mom and I had then driven to Miami. By that point, the shopping center had been finished for a few years already. When the center opened, it had a Best Buy, Albertson's (the first in Dade County),

Target (also the first in Dade County), Service Merchandise, Kenny Roger's Roasters, and Taco Bell, among other stores not mentioned in the articles. As of late 2024, Best Buy, Target, and Taco Bell are still there, but instead of Albertson's, a Publix was in its place. Also, the Alcazar restaurant that was there in 1994 was torn down sometime in the early 2010s and replaced with an AT&T store currently in that spot. The original plan stated that it would be a "Key

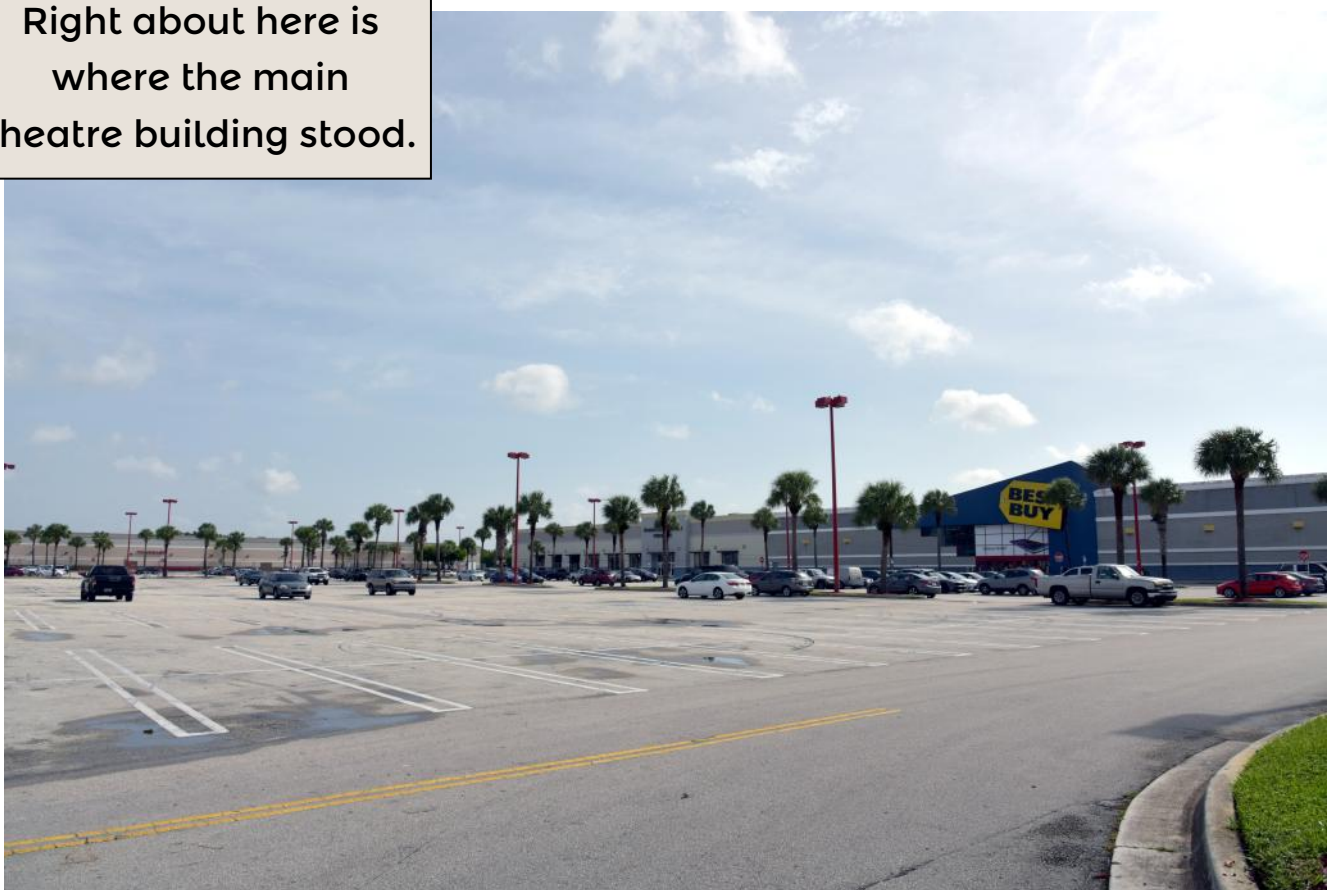
West style" shopping center. Even though I had been to Key West once in 1988, I am not really sure what they meant by that description, unless it mainly refers to palm trees. The shopping center definitely has many, many palm trees of several types! Dad went to Miami in August and September of 2016 and got some photos of the shopping center while he was on that trip, shown on the following pages.



# TROPICAIRE CENTER



Right about here is  
where the main  
theatre building stood.



# TROPICAIRE CENTER



Royal palm trees



Cabbage palm trees

# TROPICAIRE CENTER



# TROPICAIRE CENTER



*From these photos, you would never know that there was a drive-in theatre on this property!*



# TIMELINE COMPARISON

The overhead photos on these pages are screenshots taken from Google Earth. This page shows what the theatre looked like in early

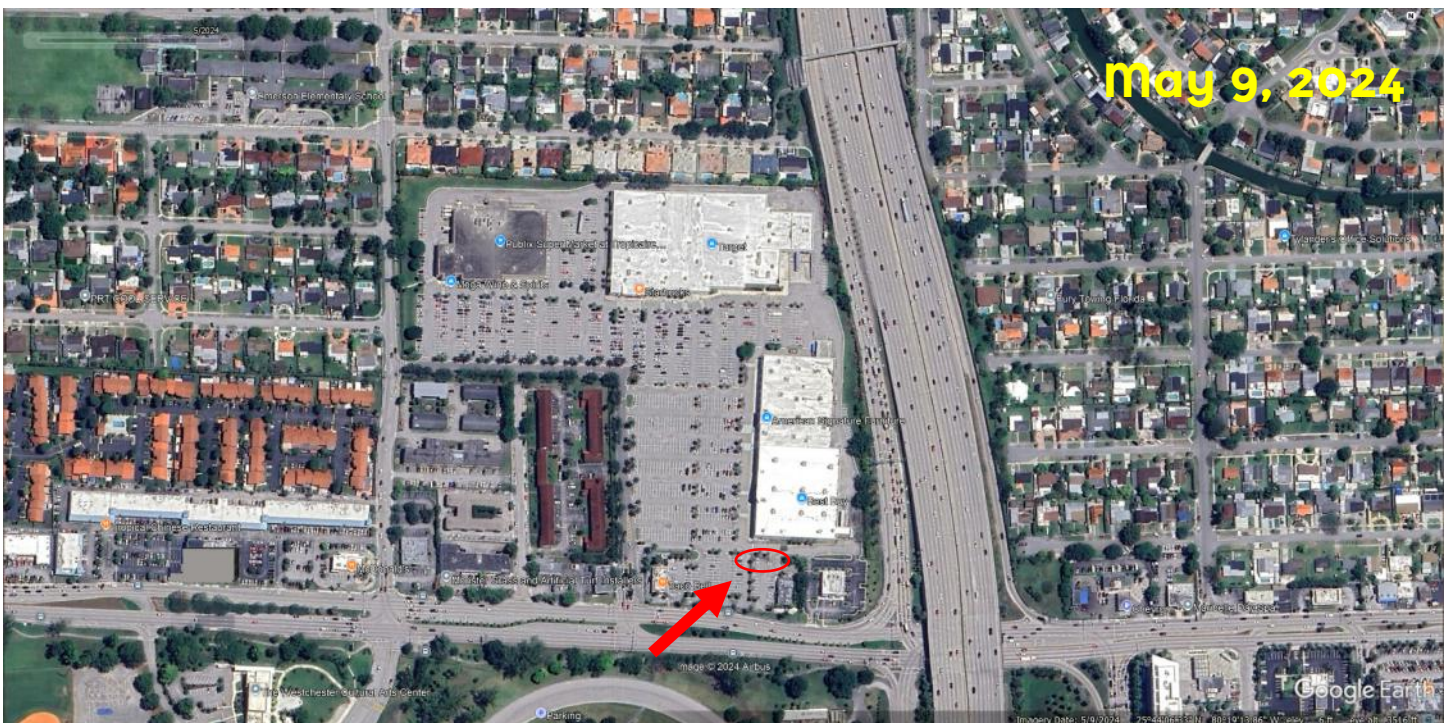
1994 and what the land looked like in early 2024, 30 years later. The overall property was basically an L shape. Also, note that

the Palmetto Expressway eventually did get widened and updated, sucking up just about every little bit of space it could. A bunch

of houses did eventually get bought out and torn down, including the house mentioned in the February 1988 article.



*Images on these pages are from Google Earth Pro historical imagery timeline.*



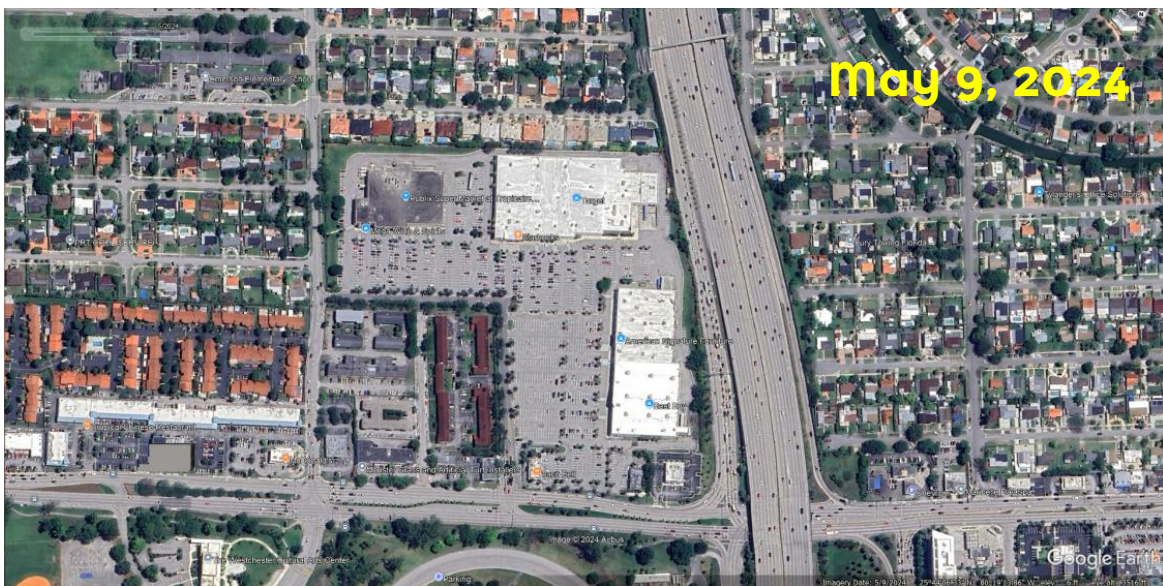
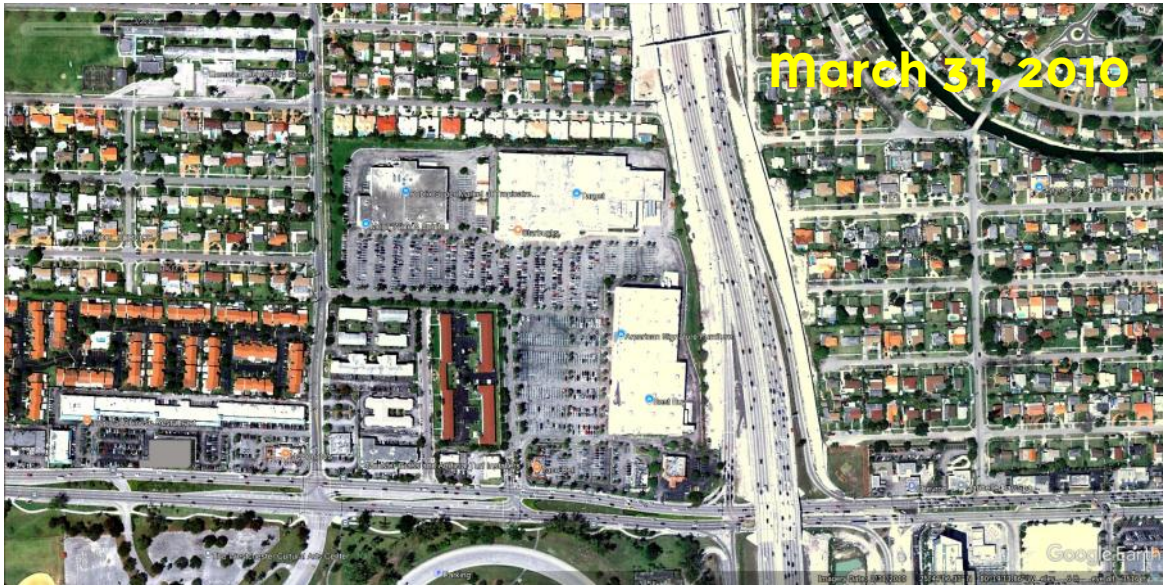
# TIMELINE COMPARISON



New row of houses



# TIMELINE COMPARISON



# PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

As mentioned previously, I was born in Miami in 1972, and I lived in the theatre until early 1989. For the 70s and the 80s, all I ever knew as home was the theatre. I never knew what living in a regular house was like. I had been to other peoples' houses before, of course, but did not think of my house as being any different from anyone else's house other than that I had no close neighbors. My elementary school, Emerson Elementary, was located to the northwest of the Tropicaire property. I had my regular trek of walking around the large property to get to the school. On rare



**Emerson Elementary School**

*Path I took to walk to school from the house. I think it took about 15 minutes.*



*Google Maps Street View, image from February 2023.*

*This is Emerson Elementary School where I went to school. As a kid, the place seemed a lot bigger! This is only a part of the series of buildings. Also, half of the land is grass, which was a good place for Field Day!*

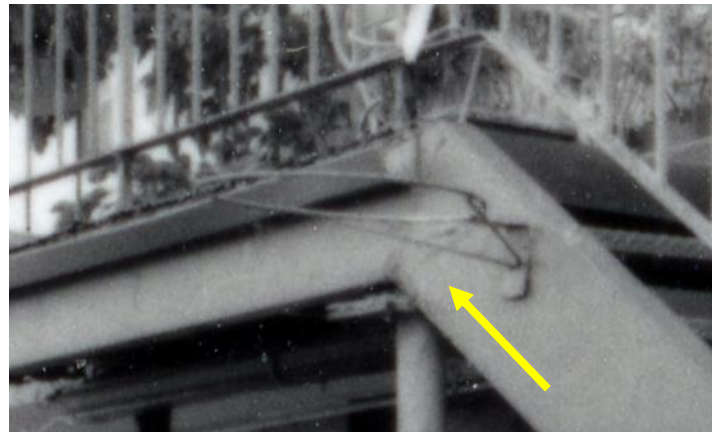
# PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

occasion, Mom or Dad would take me, or Mom might take me on the three wheel bike before she got a car. When I was older, I took the three wheeled bike by myself sometimes. There was no real way to go through the property as there was a high chain link fence surrounding the entire property with various locked gates in certain places. On occasion, I walked the other way around, but I did not like that route as it went through businesses and apartments that were more busy and potentially less safe.

In the last issue, I mentioned, “Between each floor and the roof were these flat, fairly wide concrete projections”. These architectural projections were maybe 24” to 30” out from the wall, fairly substantial in width, and maybe 4” to 6” thick. They went around on all three sides of the building between the first floor and second floor, and between the second floor and the ceiling line of the second floor with a parapet wall extending vertically from the top one. The external stairs went up level to the first

projection with concrete steps that went to the door of the house. The stairs at the top formed a balcony we called a porch with a railing. Sometimes, I would go beyond the railing and walk on the projections around the building. They were quite stable

and felt safe. On the porch and a little beyond on the one side, we kept various containers for plants and a few small trees also kept in containers. Sometime in the 80s, Dad put up a basketball hoop attached to the stairs. All I could do



*The two long lines that define the second floor are flat projections that stick out maybe 24”. They were easy to walk on past the railings, which I did occasionally. We kept pots of plants and some small trees in pots.*

*\*1978 Chevrolet Caprice Classic in “sky blue”. Originally had a dark blue top before crumbled off then painted.*

# PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

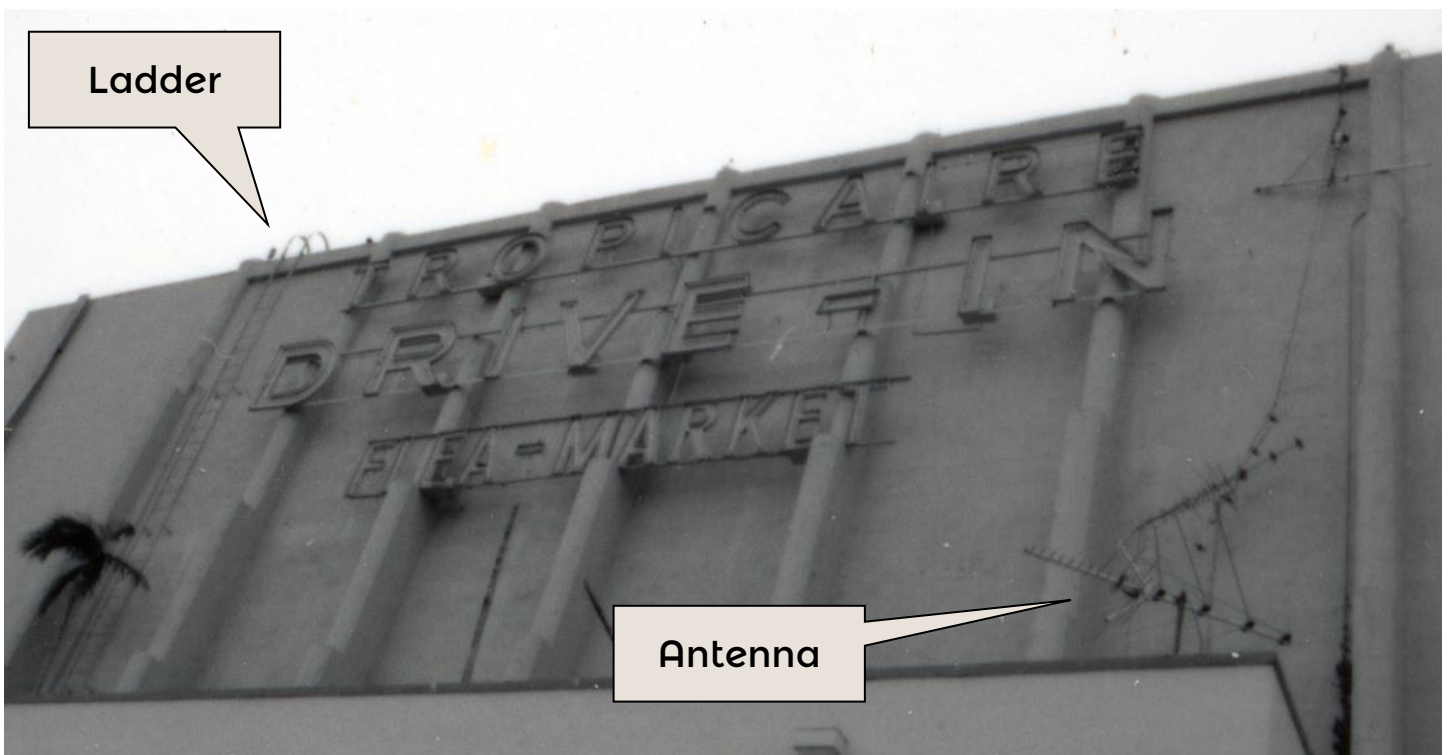
was throw the ball since the ground was all grass! At some point in the early to mid 1980s, the management relandscaped around the building with some different plants from what was there previously. Every few years, one of the metal steps had to be replaced as they rusted loose. After all, it was just painted diamond plate metal in a hot, humid tropical climate!

The inside of the house, really an apartment, that was virtually unaltered since 1949, had two bedrooms, one on each end, with a living room in the middle. My

bedroom was on the left side, and in between my room and the living room was a small kitchen and a dining room. Mom's and Dad's room was on the right side. There was a small hallway with a bathroom on the street side of the building and the bedroom. There was this small extra space attached to their bedroom where my parents originally had their bed. This room was directly above a large built in safe that was located on the first floor office. Each bedroom had a closet. In thinking back, it is amazing just how small the overall place was! In

the one corner of the living room was a small storage area with a steep set of stairs that went up to the flat roof. Originally, the building was designed to access the apartment from the first floor inside the building as the owner's living space. After the owner moved out perhaps in the late 1960s, they took out the stairs from the first floor and filled in the floor, leaving an L shaped closet of sorts that was walled off from the rest of the living room. Once in a while, we would go up on the roof for fresh air and to get a higher view. There was also a scarry metal ladder on

the front of the screen that went all the way to the top of the screen that formed the back wall of the building. Dad had put a TV antenna way up there! I imagine that you could probably pick up TV stations from Cuba or the Bahamas at that height! It was set up where it could be rotated from the living room (unless it got stuck!). Hurricane Andrew blew it over, and it dangled by the cable.



# PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

There was this time in the mid 1980s as I recall when Miami Vice—yes, that Miami Vice—was scouting locations for their shows and looked at and considered the theatre as a location. From what I remember, I don't think they ended up doing anything at the theatre. As a side note, this was also when Dad was working on Miami Vice episodes, having worked 35 episodes. He also did a studio photography session for Phillip Michael Thomas in Dad's studio in the theatre, which for a time was in the back room area of the offices of the theatre downstairs.

Mom and I moved from the theatre in Miami in February of 1989, specifically February 17, which was my parent's anniversary, to the other end of the state to Jacksonville, Florida. While I never again lived in the Tropicaire, there were several times when I did go back to visit Dad. The summer of 1989, I went to Miami for a few weeks after school got out. I took Amtrak from Jacksonville to Miami

and back. I know I went back one or two other times before the theatre was torn down (besides when the theatre was torn down), but I don't remember anymore. Occasionally, Dad came up to Jacksonville, like for my high school graduation in 1991 and for Thanksgiving in 1992, I think, as well as for my grandmother's funeral in 1994, besides other times. I was in Miami in late 1994 staying at Dad's condo

in Miramar when the theatre was torn down with the ceremony. Dad stayed in South Florida from 1994 until early 2007 after he sold the condo (he rented originally, then bought the condo later) and moved to Colorado Springs. After a couple of months of living in an extended stay place, he finally bought the house he had been in until his death in 2023, almost 17 years.

The logo for the TV series Miami Vice, featuring the words "MIAMI" and "VICE" in a stylized, blocky font with a color gradient from teal to pink.

*The TV series called Miami Vice ran from September 1984 through January 1990, for a total of five seasons.*

*There was a movie from 2006 by the same name made by Michael Mann, who was the executive producer of the original TV series, who directed and wrote the film version. The movie starred Colin Farrell, Jamie Foxx, and Gong Li*



*During the summer of 1989, I went back to Miami for a few weeks. I met up with my old MYF youth group where we did some summer activities. I'm wearing the high tops! I liked tie dyed shirts in the late 80s and early 90s.*

# PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS



Summer 1989

*This was my typical late 1980s look. I often wore tie dyed shirts and wore my Nike high tops! (I liked the support of them on my ankles.) My hair was still relatively bright red, and it stayed a little longer than short.*



*This is what Dad's entertainment center looked like in the late 1980s and early 1990s.*



*When I visited Dad in late 1992, my old room had changed where the old wall dividing the room was removed and he made it into his studio. Here is the bed I slept on when visiting.*

# TANGENTIAL THINGS

## Marines Recruiting Trailer

By the 1960s or maybe the late 1950s, a United States Marines recruiting trailer was next to the theatre building. They had two different trailers that I

know of. The first one was smaller painted in red and yellow, and the next one was larger and all white. I remember at one point one of the recruiters had painted

the front in camouflage colors of green. (No photo, unfortunately.) By the mid 1980s, the trailer had disappeared and I guess moved the recruiting office to

somewhere else. But the flagpole remained and stayed until the building was torn down, even surviving Hurricane Andrew.



*Circa 1963*



*Circa early 1980s.*

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## Commercial Building

To the west of the theatre but I think still on the theatre property (maybe) was a

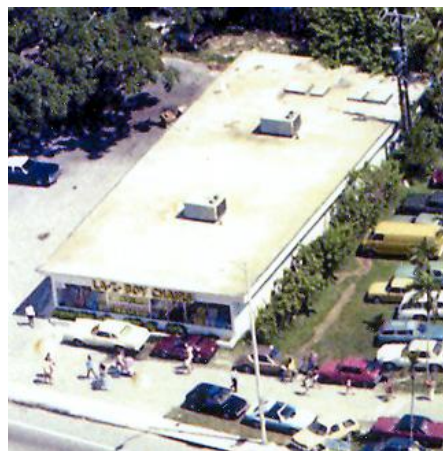
commercial building that, at my earliest recollection, was a La-Z-Boy furniture store. By

some point in the early 1980s, that store closed, and it became a Mary's Carpets. That business

remained until early 1995. Originally when the theatre was built, the spot was empty.



*Circa 1950*



*Circa 1970s*



*1994*

# TANGENTIAL THINGS

## Restaurant Building

On the other side to the east of the theatre was another business that was not part of the theatre property. Old photos from when the theatre was built showed a large fancy residence back when the Palmetto was just a rural road. But during my lifetime, the spot was a gas station and garage. Then by the fall of 1985, the land was cleared, and a fancy

restaurant was built in its place. It was called El Tio Pepe and a short time after it opened, I remember hearing about a shooting at the restaurant. It was a Spanish restaurant (like from Spain). I never ate there nor seen the inside of the place. By late 1987 and early 1988, there was an issue with the name of the restaurant being too similar to a restaurant in

## Christmas Trees

To the west of the commercial building, between Thanksgiving and Christmas for a few years in the early 1980s, there was a Christmas

tree lot. For several years, I got my Christmas tree from there, often a 5' or 6' "budget" tree that cost about \$20 or \$30.



*The Miami Herald. December 4, 1980. Page 43.*



*When the theatre was built, there was this large house. I suspect it was torn down when the roads expanded.*

# TANGENTIAL THINGS

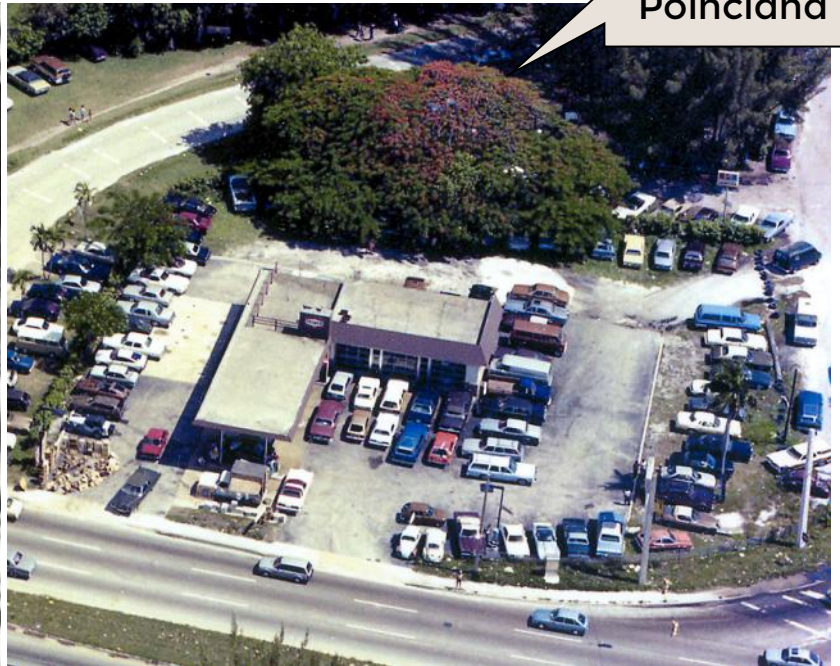
Clearwater, Florida. After several rounds of litigation, the name was changed, and it eventually became Alcazar. The restaurant was also under threat to

be bought out and torn down during the Palmetto widening issues. That restaurant remained until sometime in the early 2010s. That building

was eventually torn down and is now a small AT&T store. One thing I remember about that building is actually a large tree behind the building on the theatre

property. It was a royal poinciana tree with beautiful dark orange flowers during the summers.

Royal Poinciana



*Sometime from the Midcentury through to 1985, this corner spot was a gas station and garage.*



*The large two floor restaurant called el Tio Pepe, later renamed Alcazar. el Tio Pepe translates as Uncle Pepe. Pepe in Italian means pepper, but here, I think it is a male nickname. The new name is likely derived from Alcázar of Seville, a royal palace in Spain. The urns and around the building were large bougainvilleas.*

# TANGENTIAL THINGS



*The restaurant sign apparently changed during its time.*

*Another view of the el Tio Pepe building.*

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## Theatre Trees

Speaking of trees, the theatre was originally marketed as being a tropical paradise, beautifully landscaped to watch movies, either in your automobile or on chairs near the base of the screen. The entrance was lined with

palm trees, along with various other plants throughout the property. Along the perimeter of the property were many Australian pine trees. These were quite unusual trees in that the needles were long and thin sort of like hay and

had very small cones about the size of an acorn. They did make a thick groundcover, however. Hurricane Andrew took out many of those trees. Apparently, they are invasive trees. One of the things I remember

about the palm trees, in the front especially, is that electricity through commercial conduit went halfway up the tree with a flat halogen bulb on the end pointed up. These bulbs were red, green, orange, blue, or yellow to light up the



# TANGENTIAL THINGS

trees at night with various colors to accent the neon on the screen. After a while, the trees slowly disappeared, but

the conduit would sometimes remain and be adapted for general lighting, usually with white bulbs, or else

removed. After the relandscaping around the building, there were croton bushes of several types having the

characteristic multicolored leaves and low growing large leaf philodendrons.



*This variety of palm tree used to be in a pot as I recall and somehow ended up near the corner of the building. It was there until the building was torn down.*



*This type of palm tree was all over the front of the theatre and in the hanging garden. This variety is one of my favorite palm trees.*



*These light poles with a characteristic green cover were in several places in the front.*



# TANGENTIAL THINGS

## Neon Sign

One of the lasting characteristics of the theatre was the neon sign at night. It had been there since 1949 showing “Tropicaire Drive-In Theatre” until

the late 1980s when they replaced Theatre with “Flea Market” after the theatre stopped showing movies and was a full time flea market. The Drive-In

was larger in orange neon (the actual color of neon gas) while the other words were smaller and in green neon. When the sign had the Flea Market

words, it was a noticeably different font and shape from the original sign. I have no idea what happened to the Theatre lettering.



*Up until the late 1980s, this was the neon sign on the screen. This is the one remember the most.*



*Once becoming a full time flea market, they removed the “theatre” and replaced it with “flea market”.*

# TANGENTIAL THINGS

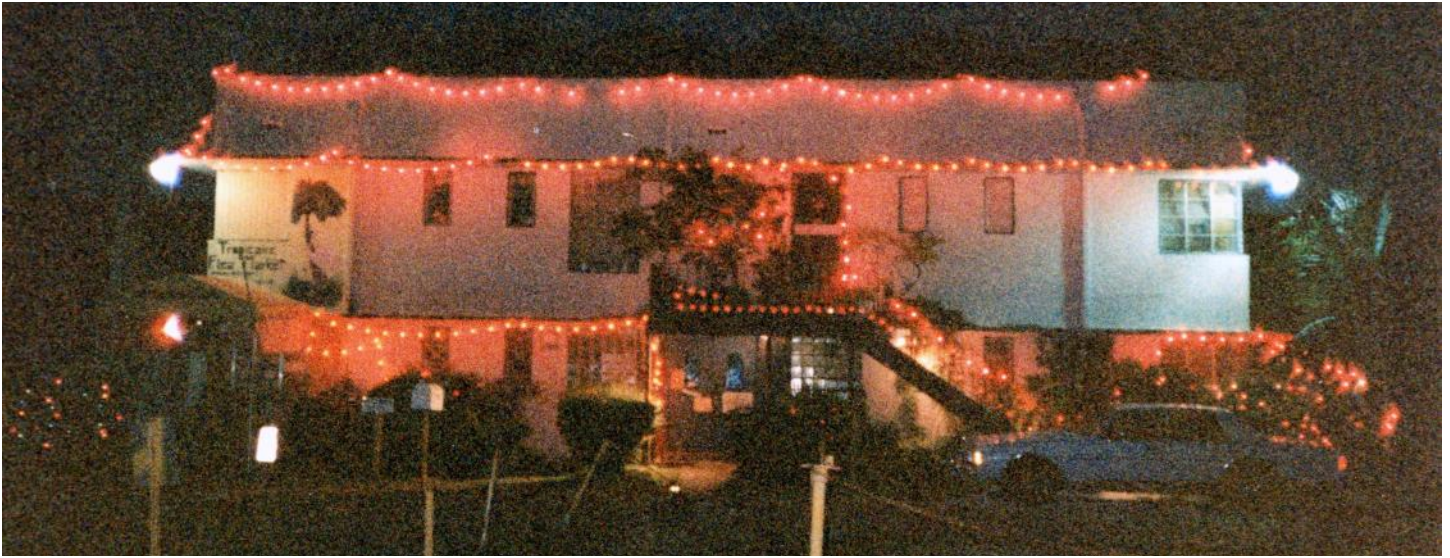
## Christmas 1992

A few months after Hurricane Andrew, I went to Miami for Christmas. I don't

remember how I went, but I think it was by Amtrak. That Christmas, Dad or

maybe someone at the theatre decorated the building with lights for Christmas, the only time

I recall that it was ever decorated with Christmas lights.



Across the street in Tropical Park, there was an attraction called Santa's Enchanted Forest that was along Palmetto Expressway. It started in 1984 and still

exists today. However, its lease in Tropical Park apparently ended in 2020, and it moved to Hialeah, then to Medley, Florida (southwest of Hialeah

and north of its original location). Someone decided to take advantage of the absence of the longstanding attraction by opening in its place a

similar Christmas attraction called Christmas Wonderland. (Seems a little shady to me!)



# TANGENTIAL THINGS

## Palmetto Expressway & Catwalk

While I personally did not have to use the catwalk to go to school or wherever else, I had been on it of course and rarely have crossed over in my own leisure to do so. For most of the history of the Palmetto, the catwalk was a simply square U shape with long ramps on each

side (fun to free ride down on a bike!). But apparently, the catwalk changed and was reoriented sometime in 2010, as part of the changes with the Palmetto Expressway in 2010. It took over 20 years, but the Palmetto was eventually widened, about as wide as it could

get, short of usurping more of people's houses. Some work prior to the expansion removed the houses that were too close to the expressway. Work was apparently completed by late 2012. The house mentioned in the February 1988 article (included in my last

issue) was taken over and torn down. This was part of the catwalk reorientation where it was moved a little more to the north and the down ramps were made into zigzags (I don't know what the technical term is for it).

Old catwalk

New catwalk

*Google Earth Pro historic imagery*



January 14, 1994

December 31, 2001

March 31, 2010

May 9, 2024



*Palmetto Expressway, looking south.*

# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE



# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE

## Dixie Drive-In Theatre

Further south in Dade County was another theatre owned by the same group called Dixie Drive-In Theatre, which was located at 14601 S Dixie Highway. Best as I can determine, the Dixie was built within a year after the Tropicaire was built, circa 1949-1950. It was much smaller, and it was built to be ready to present wide format films.

While I found beaucoups of information about the Tropicaire, I did not find nearly as much information about the Dixie, nor did I spend as much time to research information about the Dixie Drive-In Theatre as I did for the Tropicaire Drive-In Theatre.

The earliest reference I could find in the South Florida newspapers about the Dixie is an ad in The Miami News on Sunday, April 23, 1950 of a special screening for Coral Gables residents only, "Salute To Coral Gables" where a carload of people costed one dollar with the advert. Also, while being the early 1950s post war era, I came

across an interesting article in The Miami News on July 8, 1950 reporting that a discussion between the owners of the Dixie and the NAACP established an agreement with opening "the box office to citizens of color" and "are now welcome to enjoy first-run pictures at the Dixie Drive-In Theatre from within the privacy of your own car".

**SALUTE TO CORAL GABLES**  
For Coral Gables Residents Only



BRING  
the whole  
family and  
your friends—

**MONDAY, APRIL 24**

CAR AND ITS  
OCCUPANTS **\$1** with this ad

MONDAY, APRIL 24

"WHEN WILLIE COMES  
MARCHING HOME AGAIN"  
Dan Dailley — Corinne Galvet  
Always a good Double Feature

"MANHANDLED"  
See Berysa — Dorothy Lamer

**Dixie**

18 miles south of Miami  
on Hwy No. 1

Ph. 81-72921

**DRIVE-IN  
THEATRE**

*The Miami News. April 23, 1950. Page 27.*

## NAACP SCORES AGAIN

Your name might not be Joshua, the town might not be Jericho, but the walls will come tumbling down if you carry on your battle unrelentingly. Evidence: The Dixie Drive-in Theatre, just north of Perrine on Federal Highway No. 1, has opened the box office to citizens of color. Merely as a result of a forthright conversation between local NAACP representatives and the management, you are now welcome to enjoy first-run pictures at Dixie Drive-in Theatre from within the privacy of your own car. A speaker with controlable volume is at your fingertips. Refreshments and full restroom facilities for your comfort complete the hearty welcome at Dixie Drive-in Theatre.

*The Miami Times. July 8, 1950. Page 13.*

# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE

By late summer of 1950, the Dixie was outfitted with a mosquito fogging machine to reduce, or eliminate as much as possible, mosquitoes while customers were at the theatre. I can only imagine what chemical they used!

By late 1952, advertisements appeared showing the Tropicaire and the Dixie film listings together in a single ad. Like with all of the theaters, outdoors and indoors, weekly ads listed the films showing each week at each theater. The Dixie, like the Tropicaire, included a double feature usually.

*The Miami Times. September 2, 1950. Page 16.*

**Drive In Theatre  
Now Has Mosquito  
Control Machine**

The Dixie Drive In Theatre, located just 15 minutes south of Miami on Highway 1, now has among its equipment, a fogging machine which will rapidly eradicate and control mosquitoes in the theatre area. In the future mosquitoes will be no problem at this theatre. The public is always invited.

**DIXIE DRIVE-IN  
THEATRE**  
20 Miles South of Miami  
On U. S. Highway No. 1

FRI., SAT., July 7, 8  
**THE BIG LIFT**  
Montgomery Clift, Paul Douglas  
Also **HIDDEN DANGER**

SUN., MON., TUES.  
July 9, 10, 11  
**THE PALEFACE**  
in Technicolor  
**BOB HOPE JANE RUSSELL**  
7:37 — 11:04  
**JACKPOT JITTERS**  
Jiggs and Magie  
9:40

WED., THURS.  
July 12, 13  
**THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**  
In Technicolor  
**DANNY KAYE**  
BARBARA BATES  
7:37 — 11:07  
**BLACK MIDNIGHT**  
9:44

FRI., SAT.  
July 14, 15  
**BAD MEN OF TOMBSTONE**  
Broderick Crawford  
Barry Sullivan  
7:52 — 10:52  
**HOLD THAT BABY**  
Dead End Kids  
9:16

*The Miami Times.  
August 8, 1950.  
Page 16.*

**DIXIE**  
**Drive-In Theatre**  
20 Minutes South of Miami on  
U. S. Highway No. 1

FRI. & SAT. JAN. 18, 19  
By Popular Request  
TECHNICOLOR  
**SAMPSON AND DELILAH**  
Victor Mature Hedy Lamar  
7:00 and 10:25

**ISLE OF SAMOA**  
Jon Hall Susan Cabot  
9:15 Only

SUN. MON. TUES. JAN. 27, 28, 29  
**WOMAN OF  
DISTINCTION**  
Ray Milland Rosalind Russell  
7:00 and 10:00

Technicolor  
**HIGH LONESOME**  
John Barrymore, Jr.  
8:35 only

WED. & THURS. JAN. 30, 31  
Technicolor  
**WHEN WORLDS  
COLLIDE**  
Barbara Rush  
7:00 and 10:00

**FATHER IS A BACHELOR**  
William Holden  
8:25 only

FRI. & SAT. FEB. 1 and 2  
Technicolor  
**SHORT GRASS**  
Rod Cameron Cathy Downs  
7:00 and 10:00

**CARGO TO CAPETOWN**  
Broderick Crawford Ellen Drew  
8:35 only

*The Miami Times.  
January 26, 1952.  
Page 15.*

*The Miami News. December 3, 1952. Page 29.*

**TROPICAIRE**  
*The South's Most Beautiful*  
**DRIVE-IN THEATRE**

BIRD & PALMETTO ROADS  
7:03 AND 10:49  
JOHN PATRE \* ARLENE DAHL  
**"CARIBBEAN"**  
(Technicolor)  
9:10 ONLY  
JACK WARNER \* NADIA GRAY  
**"VALLEY OF THE EAGLES"**

**DIXIE DRIVE-IN  
THEATRE**

20 MIN. SO. OF MIAMI ON U.S. HWY. 1  
6:45 AND 10:30  
GENE TIERNY \* RORY CALHOUN  
**"WAY OF A GAUCHO"**

BOTH FEATURES IN TECHNICOLOR  
9:00  
GLIFTON WEBB \* MYRNA LOY  
**"CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN"**

# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE

I came across a fun feature from Farm Stores in a full page advert in The Miami News the first day of June 1960 where a patron of the Farm Stores could get Fun Tickets for free admission for bowling, roller skating, movies, and more across South Florida, including at the Tropicaire Drive-In Theatre and the Dixie Drive-In Theatre. Just as a side note, I remember the Farm Stores growing up where Dad would often get a gallon of milk or a gallon of vanilla ice cream. Rarely did we get any other flavor of ice cream as Dad just always wanted vanilla, and they probably only had two or three flavors anyway. Farm Stores still exist today in specific states and have expanded their offerings beyond dairy products in addition to also having a brand of Swiss Farm Stores.



## ANNOUNCING...

# FARM STORES'

exciting new

# FUN TICKET!

Good for **FREE** admission to

bowling...roller skating...  
movies...all kinds of  
fun activities all over Miami,  
Coral Gables, Hollywood, Ft. Lauderdale & Pompano



Farm Stores, Inc. invites every kid in town to see movies, go bowling, roller skating—all for FREE! Even Mom and Dad are included in many of the activities. All you need for admission to any of the amusements listed here are Farm Stores' Fun Tickets.

### HERE'S HOW TO GET FREE FUN TICKETS...

Simply treat the family to Farm Stores' delicious 4% butterfat milk, buttermilk, chocolate milk or fat free milk and save the jug caps. It only takes 10 jug caps per Fun Ticket and you may get as many as you want. See your friendly Farm Stores' Man today. Ask him for your Free copy of the Fun Ticket Directory.

FREE  
FUN TICKET  
DIRECTORY

Contains full  
information!



FARM STORES ARE CONVENIENTLY LOCATED THROUGHOUT SOUTH FLORIDA AND ARE OPEN 7 AM TO 11 PM • Seven days a week.

- \*\*\*\*\*
- LOOK WHERE YOU CAN GO SEE AND DO WITH FARM STORES' FUN TICKETS!
- THEATRES:**
- North Miami Theatre—12615 W. Dixie Highway, North Miami
  - Tropicaire Drive-In Theatre—7721 Bird Road, Miami
  - Drive-In Theatre—Federal Highway, Miami
  - Trail Theatre—3112 S. W. 8th Street, Coral Gables
  - Civic Theatre—33 Curtis Parkway, Miami Springs
  - Normandy Theatre—7423 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach
  - Hollywood Theatre—1720 Harrison Street, Hollywood
  - Olympic Theatre—172 E. Flagler Street, Miami
  - Paramount Theatre—357 E. Flagler Street, Miami
  - Broadway Theatre—7770 Biscayne Blvd., Miami
  - Regent Theatre—1330 N. W. 17th Avenue, Miami
  - Coast Theatre—2321 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables
  - Gables Theatre—2112 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables
  - Shores Theatre—3602 N. E. 2nd Avenue, Miami Shores
  - Beach Theatre—421 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach
  - Colony Theatre—1850 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach
  - Florida Theatre—37 E. Las Olas Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale
  - Horne Theatre—322 E. Las Olas Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale
  - Florida Theatre—2016 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood
- BOWLING:**
- Beach Bowling Center—79th Street Causeway Blvd. Bldg.—925 Bird Road
  - The Bowlerama—200 N. W. 79th Street
  - Bowling Palace—10855 N. W. 7th Avenue
  - Real O'Mat—South Dixie Hwy. & 132nd Street
  - Carol City Lanes—3601 N. W. 167th Street
  - Chiverton Lanes—Hwy. No. 401 & N. W. 170th Street
  - Cutter Ridge Bowling Lanes—3075 So. Adolphus Drive
  - Coliseum Lanes—1500 Douglas Road
  - Health Bowling Lanes—740 East 9th Street
  - Lounge Bowling & Grill—1975 N. W. 20th Street
  - Miami Bowling—222 N. E. 13th Street
  - Palm Springs Bowling Lanes—720 W. 48th Street, Hialeah
  - Panhandle Bowling Center—2610 N. W. 36th Street
  - Pinerama Bowl—1500 West Dixie Hwy.
  - Playdown Lanes—1717 S. W. 8th Street
  - Trail Lane—705 S. W. 8th Street
  - Triumph Lanes—2121 N. W. 119th Street
  - Town Lanes Inc.—Rt. 1, So. Federal Hwy., Florida City
  - Westfield Bowling Lanes—5305 N. Federal Hwy., Pompano Beach
  - Pompano Lanes—2200 N. Federal Hwy., Pompano Beach
  - Bowlero Lanes—2201 S. Federal Hwy., Pompano Beach
  - Minor Lanes—1517 N. E. 25th Street, Wilton Manors
  - Bowlingdale Lanes—1730 E. Sunrise Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale
  - Fleming Lanes—2222 W. Broward Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale
  - Lauderdale Lanes—1502 S. W. 42nd Ave., Circle Rd. 7, Ft. Lauderdale
  - Bowleria Lanes—1830 S. E. 6th Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale
  - Johnson St. Lanes—5727 Johnson Street, West Hollywood
  - West Hollywood Lanes—296 S. State Road 7, West Hollywood
  - Holiday Lanes—146 Market, Hallandale
- SKATING RINKS:**
- Skatland—12895 N. W. 7th Avenue, North Miami
- \*\*\*\*\*

**DIXIE**  
222 N. E. 1st Ave.  
LAST DAY  
SAGA OF THE GREAT SOUTH-  
WEST—Written in Blazing Bullets!  
GLENN FORD  
in "TEXAS"  
CLAIRE TREVOR & WM. HOLDEN  
PLUS FUN HIT  
"BREWSTER'S MILLIONS"  
Dennis O'Keefe & Helen Walker

The Miami Herald.  
March 5, 1949. Page 4.

The Miami News. June 1, 1960. Page 30.

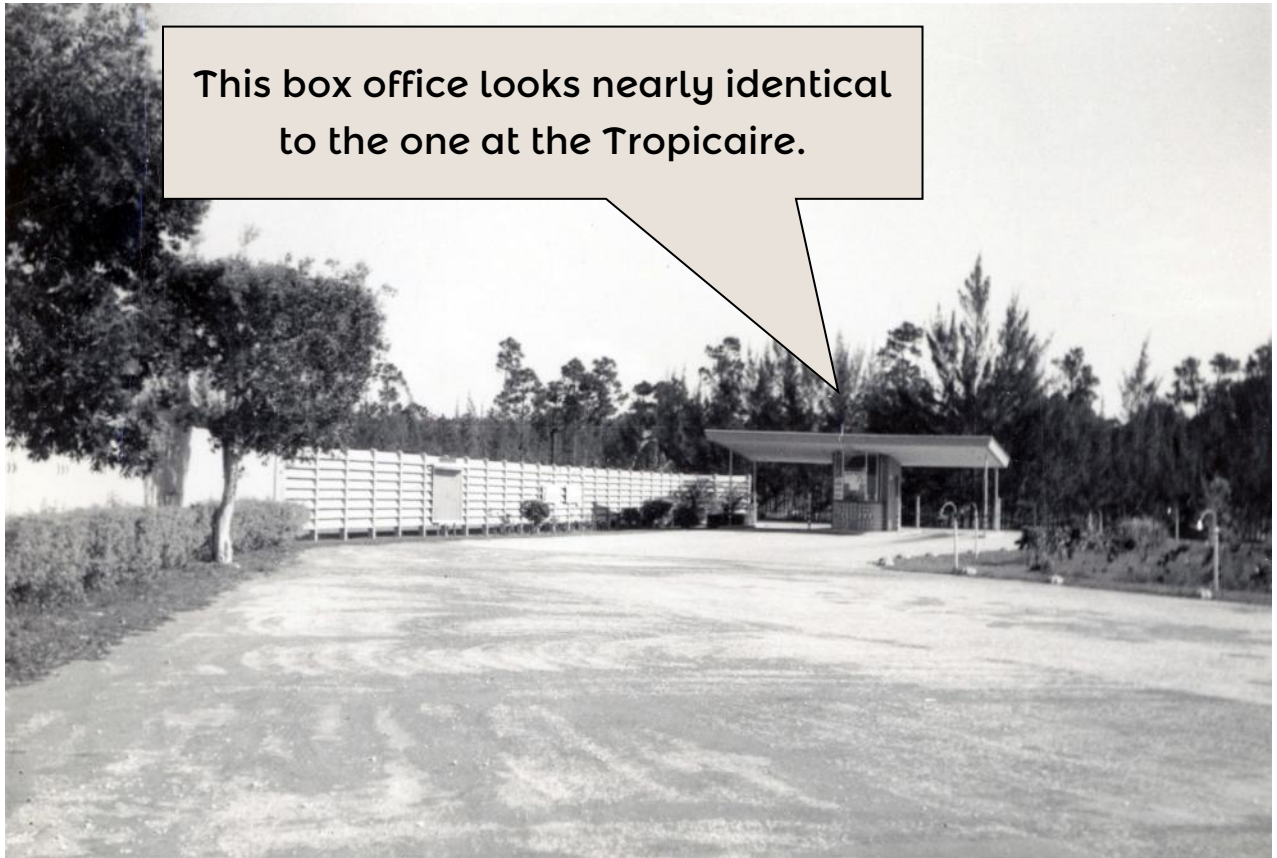
# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE



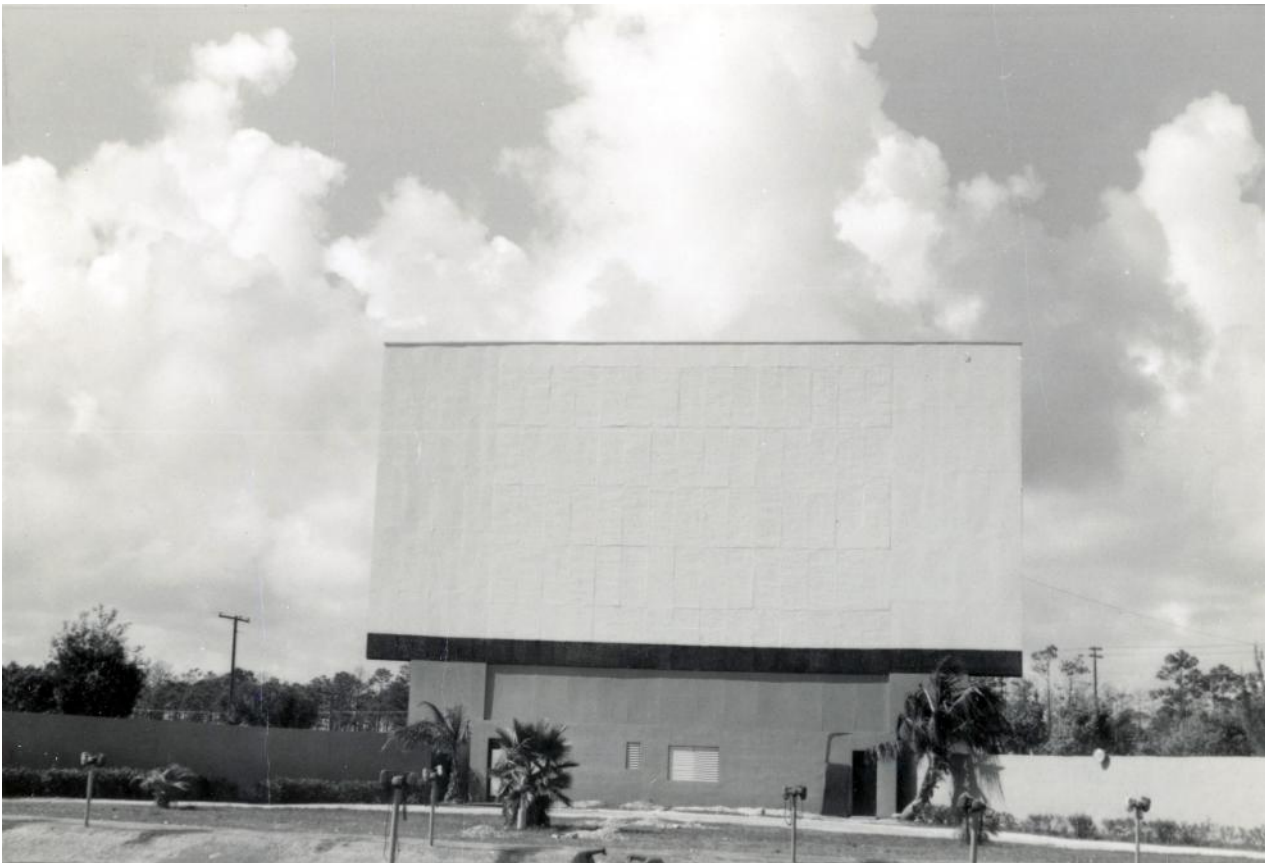
*The photos on these pages were taken by Dad and probably date to the early 1960s based on the films shown.*



# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE



This box office looks nearly identical to the one at the Tropicaire.



# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE

A legal notice listed in The Miami News on May 29, 1965 requested a variance for use of the theatre property as a “swap shop” on Saturdays and Sundays during daylight hours. This was a few years later after the Tropicaire established a similar swap meet on the theatre grounds. It is unclear, however, if a swap shop was ever established at the Dixie.

For Easter in 1970, the Dixie Drive-In Theater was the venue for an Easter sunrise service hosted by the Palmetto Community Covenant Church. The same sunrise service was held again in 1971 and appeared to continue for several years through the 1970s.

★ ★ ★

The Dixie Drive-In Theatre, 14601 S. Dixie Highway, will be the site of another Easter sunrise service at 7 a.m. The Palmetto Community Church of the Covenant will provide music, and the Rev. Walter A. Steen will speak. Coffee and doughnuts will be served.

★ ★ ★

*The Miami Herald. March 29, 1975. Page 12.*

## Drive-ins

**BREEZEWAY** Phantasm (R) 8:35 Shoot (R) 10:15  
**DIXIE** Invasion of the Body Snatchers (PG) 8:30 Wanda Nevada (PG) 10:17  
**TROPICAIRE** Blood Mania (R) 8:30 Phantasm (R) 9:58

*The Miami News. June 14, 1979. Page 12.*



**EASTER  
SUNRISE SERVICES**

**BAY SHORE LUTHERAN CHURCH:** 8:30 a.m. 5051 Biscayne Boulevard. Speaker: Rev. Jonathan Aho. Special music and choir.

**CAROL CITY CENTER:** 6:00 a.m. 2734 N.W. 183rd St. Speaker: Rev. John I. Hendricks. Special music by Bethany Presbyterian Jr. Choir. Sponsored by Carol City area churches.

**CENTRAL STADIUM:** (East of Palmetto Expressway at Coral Way), 21st Annual Miami Passion Play (Easter Pageant), Saturday, April 10th 8 p.m., Sunday, April 11th 5-45 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. A dramatic presentation with a cast of over 150. No admission price. Room for 150 cars — standing room for 2000 people.

**CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH:** 6:30 a.m. 8701 S.W. 124th Street.

**CORAL GABLES CITY HALL:** 6:00 a.m. East Lawn. Mr. Scates, pastor First United Presbyterian Church of Coral Gables. Special music.

**CROSS OF GLORY UNITED CHURCH:** 6:30 a.m. 9025 Sunset Drive

**KEY BISCAZYNE BEACH CLUB:** 5:30 a.m. 685 Ocean Drive. Sponsored by Key Biscayne Community Church. Public invited; informal attire, refreshments served.

**EAST RIDGE:** 6:30 a.m. 19301 S.W. 87th Avenue (Lutheran Retirement Village)

**HAULOVER BEACH, BAL HARBOR:** 6:00 a.m. Sponsored by Church by the Sea.

**HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH (Mo. Synod):** 6:00 a.m. 650 N.E. 135th St.

**MIAMI MARINE STADIUM:** 5:30 a.m. Speakers: Rev. John Huffman, Judge James Rainwater, Rev. James Tavoy, Bruce Hill, Ted Place. Soloist: Anita Bryant. Barrington College Choir

**NORTH SHORE PARK:** 6:00 a.m. The Ocean and 73rd Street. Sponsored by Redeemer Lutheran Church of Miami Shores. Special music by church choir. Seating provided.

**PALMETTO COMMUNITY COVENANT CHURCH:** 6:00 a.m. Dixie Drive-In Theatre, 14601 South Federal Highway (US 1)

**ST. MATTHEWS and ST. JAMES LUTHERAN CHURCH:** 6:00 a.m. in the Garden of Our Lord, 110 Phoenicia Avenue, Coral Gables. Bi-lingual service (English and Spanish). Combined services.

**ST. PAUL INSTITUTIONAL A.M.E. CHURCH:** 4:30 a.m. 1876 N.W. 51st Terrace.

**ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH:** 6:30 a.m. 10700 S.W. 56th Street.

**SHERATON BEACH HOTEL:** 6:00 a.m. 19400 Collins Avenue. Sponsored by The Sunny Isles Lutheran Church.

**27th AVENUE DRIVE-IN:** 6:00 a.m. 2700 N.W. 87th St. Service by Our Saviour Lutheran Church and Faith Lutheran Church — Hialeah.

**FPL**  
FLORIDA POWER & LIGHT COMPANY  
 HELPING BUILD FLORIDA

*The Miami Herald. April 4, 1971. Page 64.*

MANAGER trainee and maintenance. Tropicaire and Dixie Drive-In theatres. permanent position, theatre experience helpful but not required. Call manager 375-4535.

*The Miami Herald. June 11, 1969. Page 46.*

# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE



*From The Miami Herald. The films are from 1975.*



*These photos were found on a site called pbase.com. The original sources are unknown, but could quite possibly be from The Miami Herald or from the Dixie owners.*

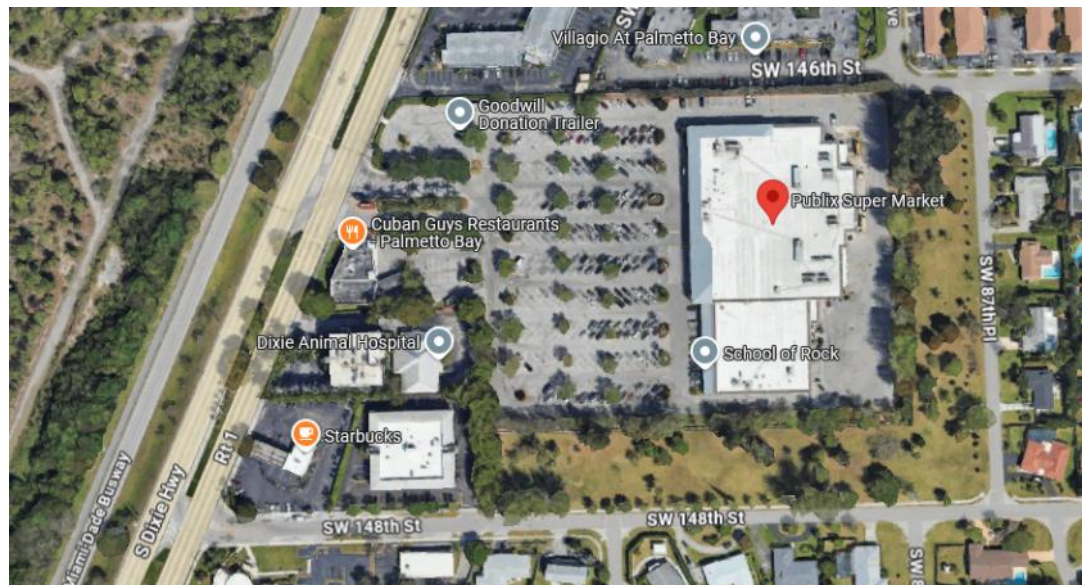


# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE

By December of 1975, the Dixie Drive-In land appeared to be for sale per a notice in The Miami Herald. It noted that the property was 11.41 acres divided into two BU-2 (9.26 acres) and RU-2 (2.15 acres) uses. The two acres appeared to be unused, vacant lands. Still for sale in mid 1978, another notice provided that the property was for sale at \$1,925,000 and had 360 feet of frontage along Dixie Highway. While the property was for sale, the theatre continued to show movies. The last mention of the Dixie in the papers showing movies appears to be in mid June of 1979 with the last double feature appearing to be Invasion Of The Body Snatchers and Wanda Nevada shown on Sunday, June 17, 1979. Today, the land is a Publix Supermarket, taking most of the land for the store and parking lot with several businesses along the highway.



*Found on Flickr.*



*Google Maps*

**NOTHING LIKE IT**  
 Entire 11.41 acres of Dixie Drive-In Theatre property, So Dixie Hwy and 148 St now available 9.26 acres BU-2 use 2.15 vacant acres RU-2 Well below market. Call Mr. Quinn  
**QUINN PROPERTIES**  
 47 Valencia Realtors 447-4403

*The Miami Herald. December 14, 1975. Page 296.*

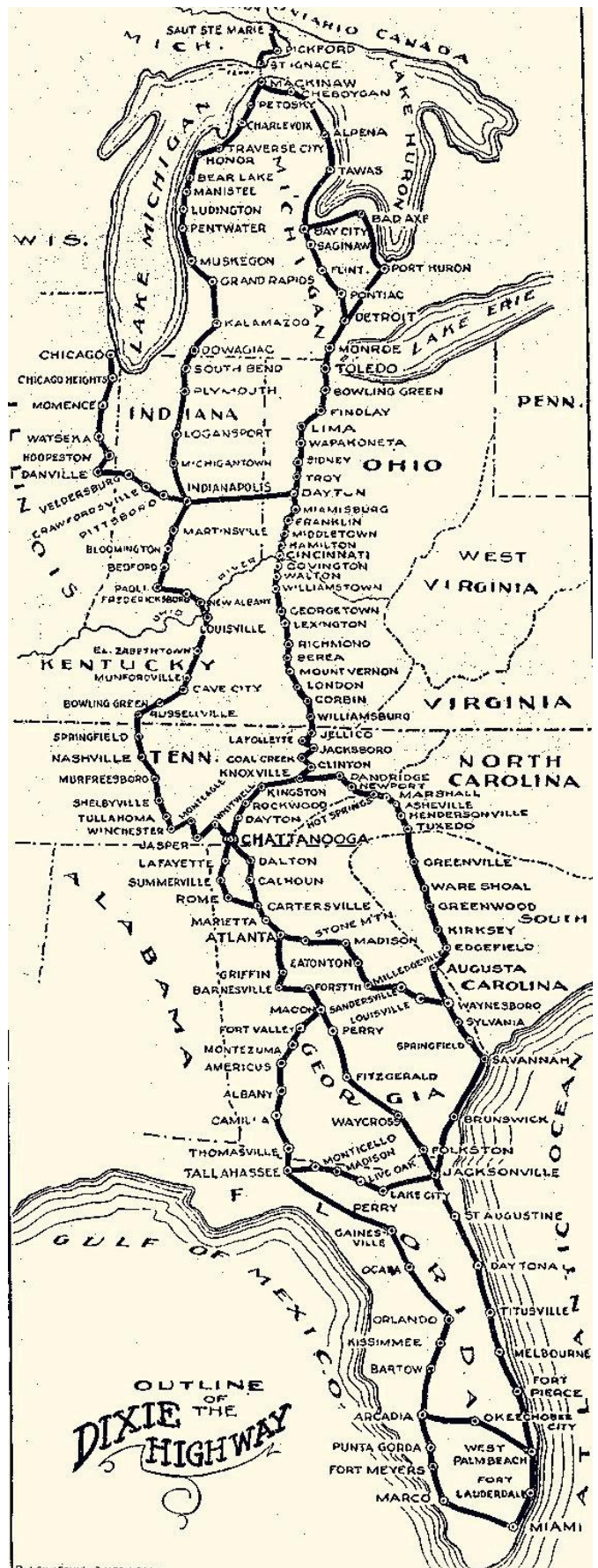
**Top So. Dixie Site**  
 Dixie Drive-In Theatre  
 9.26 acres zoned BU-2  
 2.15 acres zoned RU-2  
 Total 11.41 acres now available at only \$2.87 per sq ft.  
**QUINN PROPERTIES**  
 47 Valencia Realtors 447-4403

*The Miami Herald. November 28, 1976. Page 381.*

# DIXIE DRIVE-IN THEATRE

The Dixie Highway was a series of parallel roads that went from Miami all the way up to the Canadian border going through Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, a small spur in Illinois to Chicago, and both

Michigans. It technically still exists as a road, but much of it was absorbed into various other roads and interstates. The theatre was undoubtedly named after the road, obviously to be easily associated with its location.



*This was a color negative I found in Dad's house. I think this was Dad's car in the early 1960s. I think this was the same car in the photos of my parent's wedding.*



# FINAL THOUGHT

## Donald “Keith” McComas

The owner of the Tropicaire Drive-In Theatre and the Dixie Drive-In Theatre was Donald “Keith” McComas. He died on January 13, 1999. He came to Miami from Burkesville, Kentucky in 1948. He was a Staff Sargent with the United States Marines and served in the Pacific Theater during World War II. This might explain why a Marines recruiting trailer was next to the Tropicaire building!

### **MCCOMAS**

**DONALD “Keith”**, A Miami resident since 1948 coming from Burkesville, KY died January 13, 1999. A graduate of The University of Louisville Engineering School. He was a Staff Sgt. in the U.S. Marines serving in The Pacific Theater during WW II A member of the French Wine Society Chevaliers De Tastevin. Keith was the Owner and Manager and help build Tropicaire Drive In Theater and the Dixie Drive In Theatre from 1949-1994. Two sons predeceased him. He is survived by his wife of 56 years Eleanor Slade McComas. Son John Keith McComas. 2 Granddaughters and 2 Great Granddaughters. His brother Jack D McComas and his sister Elizabeth O. D’Ignazio. Memorial Services 11:00AM Saturday at St. Matthews Episcopal Church (7410 Sunset Drive). In lieu of flowers family request donation to either Muscular Dystrophy or the Cancer Center at The University of Miami

**STANFILL FUNERAL HOME**  
10545 S Dixie 667-2518  
Family Owned & Operated



The [de Stolfe Journal](#) is a publication made by Robert-George de Stolfe. The first issue was published in March 1986 as the de Stolfe Journal and published irregularly until 1998 (17 issues total). The *Candid* version of the Journal started in July 2012 through December 2018 (over 60 regular and special issues). Now back to the original name starting in 2019, archives of all issues—including the original ones (1980s-1990s)—are available on the website: [www.destolfe.com](http://www.destolfe.com)

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Robert-George de Stolfe

#### **Graphics/Layout\***

Robert-George de Stolfe

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