

Progress Often Wipes

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

There's something inexpressably sad about progress. And "sadness" describes the way I felt last week when I learned the old "toothpick" bridge at Wabasso is scheduled to be torn down and replaced with a high-rise concrete and steel structure.

It's the last of the old

wooden structures spanning the Indian River, and its timbers are filled with memories from childhood. I helped replace some of those timbers the summer I worked for Sleepy Hamilton on the county crew. That was the same summer John Jewett and I waded waist deep through the mangrove swamp on the island, cutting roots with

our bush axes, clearing the survey line so Ed Carter's engineers could get busy on a new road southward.

PROGRESS HAS already wiped away many of the landmarks. Part of the old bridge has been replaced with an earthen causeway, but there's still enough left to take you back to yesterday.

Turn off busy U. S. 1 at Glaab's store and wind down that tree enshrouded byway to the river. The

Perspective

stately Australian pines form a cathedral aisle as you move through the

Away Many Memories

chancel toward the altar of the sacred sea. Ancient citrus trees stand like acolytes in the wings and clumps of banana and bamboo trees form picturesque chapels beckoning one to worship. Speed, confusion, even time seem to fade away as you drink of the undefiled cup in God's creation.

THE OLD bridge with its slowly swinging draw still stands as a magnificent monument to a bygone era against the backdrop of waving palms, towering pines, lapping waters and blue Florida skies.

But now all this is to go, smashed to earth in ignominy before the disciples of speed and the purveyor

of billboards. "Progress" is the term used by modern man as he moves in with his bulldozers and concrete trucks to wipe away another of yesterday's hallmarks and destroy the beauty of God's outdoor cathedral.

MAYBE I'M simply growing nostalgic in my

middle years, but I can't help but feel that our land is poorer because a part of the past is being cleared to make way for the future.

And I wonder if the Psalmist would have been able to have found "his help" if, when he lifted up his eyes to the hills, he'd have seen a skyscraper instead.