

2/26/65

YOUR MONEY'S WORTH

Auto Travel Resolution Ahead

By Sylvia Porter

Building of our 41,000-mile Interstate Highway System is now approaching the halfway mark. Scheduled for completion by 1972, the historic project will connect virtually every urban population center in our country. It'll cost \$47 billion or so, a hefty \$20 billion more than the original estimate.

What will this network of highways mean to you, the automobile traveler?

It'll mean you'll be able to drive from New York to California, from Boston to Miami, without stopping for a red light.

It'll slash your auto driving time for business or pleasure travel and it surely will be a powerful spur to use your car instead of buying plane or train space for comparatively long trips.

It'll stimulate the creation of giant "service complexes" along the 41,000-mile system which will stay open night and day and offer you one-stop services ranging from rooms and restaurants to gas, oil and major auto repairs.

It'll encourage millions of people to travel on-the-cuff, for they'll be able to use gasoline credit cards to charge expenses at the complexes.

The shape of things to come is emerging now.

## Motel chains are scrambling for large plots of land surrounding the major interchanges of the Interstate system. The land is by no means plentiful or cheap.

## Oil companies, motel and restaurant chains are affiliating to establish the service complexes. Latest to join up are Quality Courts Motels, Phillips Petroleum and Dobbs Houses. Holiday Inns and Gulf Oil preceded them, and so did TraveLodge and Pure Oil. Standard Oil of Ohio is building its own motels. In explaining the affiliation in an interview, John G. Lacock, president of Quality Courts Motels, remarked, "We believe that motorists will leave the highways only when necessary to stop for fuel, meals or lodging, or when they reach their destinations. Obviously, travelers are going to favor facilities that provide all the basic services at one stop." --MORE--

## Motels are becoming bigger and more luxurious. Swimming pools, wall-to-wall carpeting, ice-making machines, baby cribs, TV, radio, etc., are now standard items in the leading motel systems. Only a few years back, they were promoted as extras.

## The linked motel and oil companies are going all out to promote each other with guidebooks, travel tour arrangements, ads.

## The motels are honoring the gasoline credit cards of their company affiliate while the service stations are making reservations for travelers at their motel affiliate. Quality Courts has been honoring Phillips 66 credit cards at its 500 motels for only two months, but Lacock reports, "It already has opened up a tremendously big market. Many are discovering for the first time the convenience of traveling with only a minimum amount of cash."

## The expenses of financing expansion are compelling the motel chains to seek outside financing. Among the leaders which have sold shares to the public are Holiday Inns, Howard Johnson and Quality.

But what will this mean to the small, independent motels? (There are more than 62,000 motels in the U.S. grossing \$4.5 billion a year.)

Unquestionably, many will be in a squeeze. There's no doubting the appeal of a motel which belongs to a national organization that can provide so many services at one location. There's no doubting the pressures on individually owned and operated motels, especially those some distance from a super-highway access. The motel industry is heading into a phase of transition and consolidation.

As of now, only 19,000 miles of the 41,000-mile network have been opened to traffic. But, even at this point, it is clear that the system will not only revolutionize our auto travel habits but also the organization and marketing practices of our huge, multi-billion dollar oil and motel industries.

(Distributed 1965 by the Hall Syndicate, Inc.)  
(All Rights Reserved)