

# TW Signs

Deerfield Beach, Florida

**Shop owners:** Denis Tranchida and Richard Landry **Shop size:** 1000 sq. ft.

**Ages:** Denis is 58, Richard is 61 **Web site** [www.twsigns.info](http://www.twsigns.info)

**D**enis Tranchida and Richard Landry founded TW Signs 25 years ago in a booming community on Florida's Atlantic coast. Their sign shop produces a range of different types of work but specializes in monument signs for gated communities and other residential developments.

SignCraft visited with Denis one afternoon not long ago, and here's what he had to say...



Richard Landry (left) and Denis Tranchida

I've been involved in the sign trade here in Florida for 36 years. I started out working in the restaurant business in New York then went to work for my uncle on Long Island. He owned a sign company and

it didn't take long before I was hooked. After a few years, I moved back to Florida, where I'd lived before and maintained a residence, and went to work for a local sign shop. When that owner closed the shop, he referred several of his customers to me. That's how I got started on my own.

How I got that job was actually kind of funny: the place was called The Sign Shop, and I walked in and asked the guy for a job. "I don't need anybody," was his answer. So I made him an offer that I'd work for him for a week for nothing and, if he didn't like what I could do, I'd be on my way. He said, "Fine, go to work." Well, I spent the next six years there at top pay. From there I went to another shop where all I did was routed redwood and cedar signs eight hours a day, five



5-by-10 $\frac{1}{2}$ -ft. sign of Sign•Foam high-density urethane board [Sign•Arts Products, 800-3384030, [www.signfoam.com](http://www.signfoam.com)] laminated to overlaid plywood; with a simulated stucco finish and a sandblasted sign face

days a week. When that owner closed the shop, he gave me all his customers and that's how I got started on my own.

My good friend Richard Landry had been working with me at the wood sign shop that closed, and I asked if he wanted to go in on starting a new shop with me. At first he wasn't sure; he lived an hour away, had just built a house and had a new baby. I stayed in his ear every day and finally talked him into it. Now he's my partner, we're 50-50. I promised him he'd have a paycheck every week, but it turned out for the first seven weeks that we didn't have anything. But, since the eighth week and for the 25 years since, he's never missed a paycheck.

It's just the two of us here. I do the sales and bookkeeping and run the business; Richard designs and builds the signs. It works out great because he's a better craftsman than I am and I've got the gift of gab. It's turned out to be pretty good.

Most of our work is linked directly to the building and construction industries, so with the downturn in Florida's economy, it's been rough. We're holding our own, but our sales are down about 45% from last year. So we've been putting money back in the business, trying to survive and just ride it out.

After 25 years at this location, I do have some pretty steady customers and that helps. Right now there are some nice irons in the fire, and we're hoping they come through. When you're making signs and sign systems for big residential developments, there's just a lot of hurry-up-then-wait. A lot of what hap-



5-by-10-ft. double-face concrete sign with an HDU cap and copy. Column at left is 2-by-7-ft. and is built from HDU and overlaid plywood fastened to the existing concrete structure



Sign face is 6-by-11-ft. and made of HDU laminated to overlaid plywood. The copy is cut from aluminum.



5½-by-16½-ft. double-faced HDU sign with copy cut from HDU board



**“For big residential developments, there's a lot of hurry-up-then-wait, thanks to permitting delays.”**



2-by-5-ft. sandblasted HDU on an aluminum structure



pens with those jobs depends on permitting and county government, and often it's just a lot of waiting. Sometimes it takes months to get something sold.

Most of our clientele are right here in the Deerfield Beach/Boca Raton area, but we will occasionally go to Miami or Orlando. Our area has proven to be the perfect market for the type of work we offer. 75% of what we do is sandblasted and monument signs, and the rest is vinyl, truck lettering, that sort of thing. We also sub out some electrical signs and every once in a while I will sell a big electric sign, a \$60,000 to \$100,000 job.

Most of our monument signs are built in-house, using an overlaid plywood frame and Gorilla Glue with Sign•Foam high-density urethane graphic components [Sign•Arts Products, 800-338-4030, [www.signfoam.com](http://www.signfoam.com)]. If the sign face gets sandblasted, we send that out and do the fabrication here in the shop.

Our shop is 1000 sq. ft., with the office area built upstairs in a loft. We've been at the same location for the past 25 years. The shop itself is set up like your basic dimensional sign shop, with all the usual woodshop tools.

We sub out all of our vinyl cutting, digital printing and CNC routing. We've been very fortunate and have established great relationships with some good local subcontractors, some of them we've dealt with for over 20 years. We have at our disposal probably four graphic artists that we sub out to and send out some of the routing, also.

It's all worked out really well for us so far. Richard and I enjoy working together, and we've established relationships with many excellent customers and subcontractors over the years. Like everyone else we're ready for the economy to turn around, but even so, it's been good. •\$€

—From an interview with John McIltrout



5-by-13-ft. concrete structure with HDU cap and copy. The column at left is 2-by-6-ft.