

# Bridgebusters blast trestle into Missouri

By Kevin Dugan  
Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

Fog obscured the view of most spectators who turned out Saturday to watch the demolition of the 96-year-old Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge which spanned the Missouri River at Nebraska City.

Officials said the unused bridge was destroyed to relieve Burlington Northern of maintenance re-

sponsibilities.

The bridge was one of the last of its kind in the country, said Sam Riter, project manager for Martin Explosives Inc., the company which undertook the demolition.

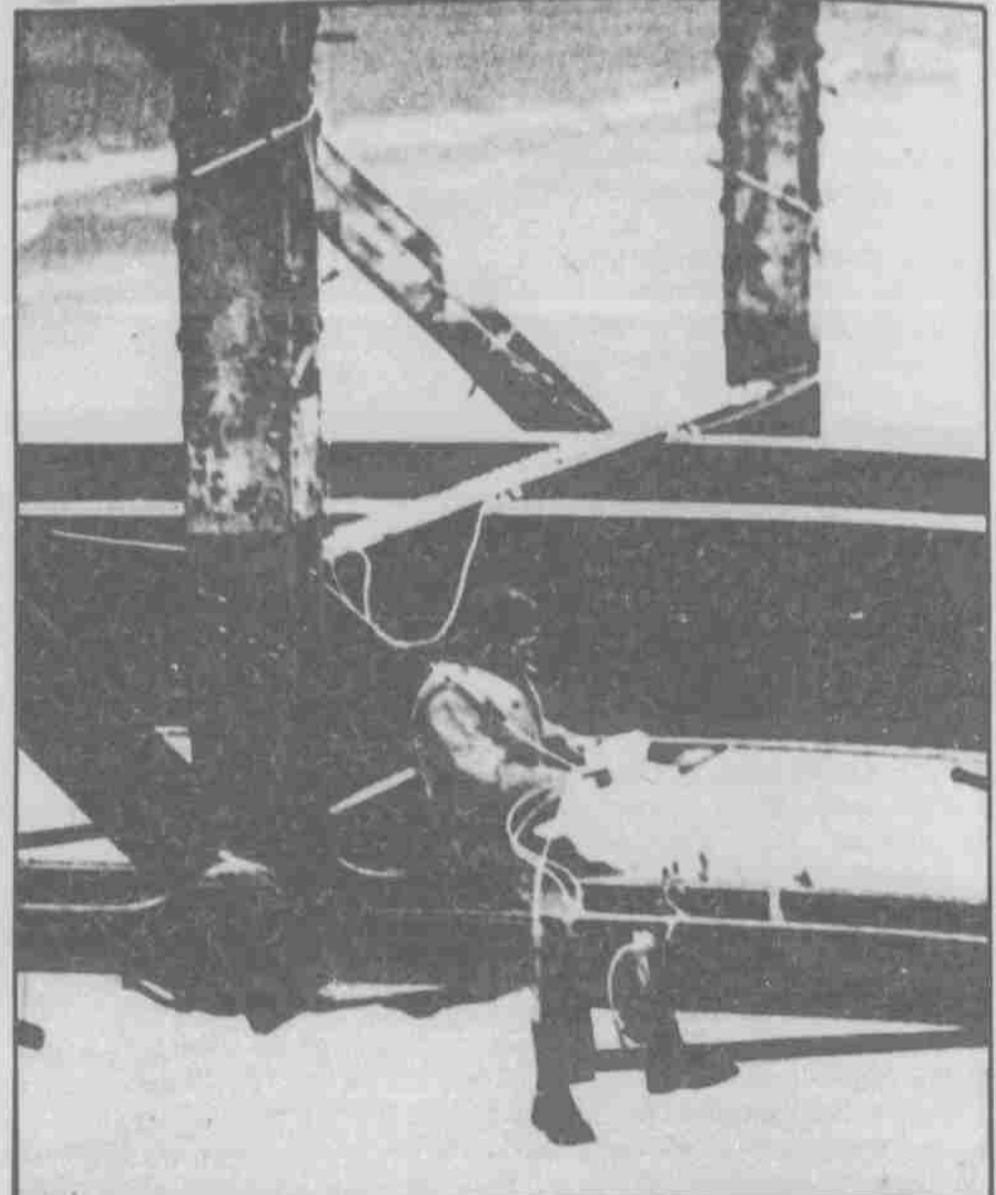
"They just don't make them like that anymore," he said. "You could drive every back road from now until you die and be lucky to come across another like that one."

Edward Lyon, 89, who painted the bridge as a young boy and whose father collected tolls, had the honor of setting off the explosion. He said originally the bridge serviced a 7-mile stub-run between Nebraska City and Payen Junction, Iowa. "From there you could hook-up with the main line between Kansas City and Omaha," he said. He said the bridge was built for the Burlington-Missouri Railroad, which made 10 trips every 24 hours across with passengers and freight.

Lyon said the bridge was planked for pedestrians and horses until the U.S. Hwy. 2 span was constructed in 1932. "Tolls cost a nickel if you walked, 40 cents for single horse buggies and 50 cents for team and wife," he said.

Riter said it was "an interesting bridge to work on because of its massiveness." The steel was two inches thick in places, he said, and they estimated about 1,500 tons of steel were contained in the entire structure. That's 3 million pounds of metal. "Who knows what went through the engineer's mind 100 years ago?" Riter said.


Cutting torches were used to separate the bridge into sections and cut off extraneous parts like webbing, the criss-crossed patterns seen on bridges and other braces of lower gauged metal, Rite said. He said they cut around stress areas, saving those parts for the explosives.



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Daley wraps bridge explosives in plastic 50 feet above the Missouri River Thursday during the outset of a winter storm.

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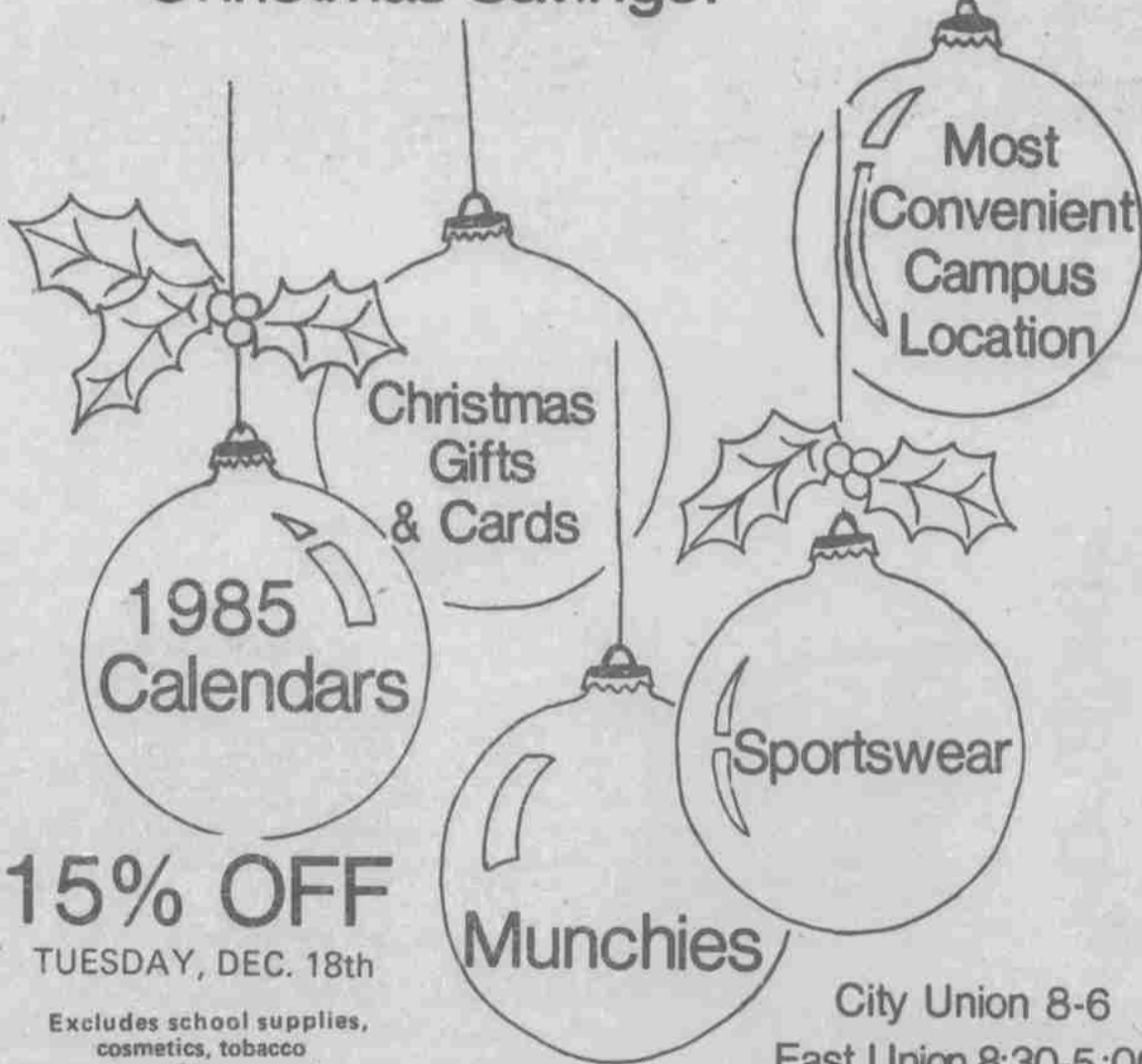
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Explosives left the U.S. Highway 2 bridge standing and the Burlington Northern bridge partially submerged in icy waters near Nebraska City.

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