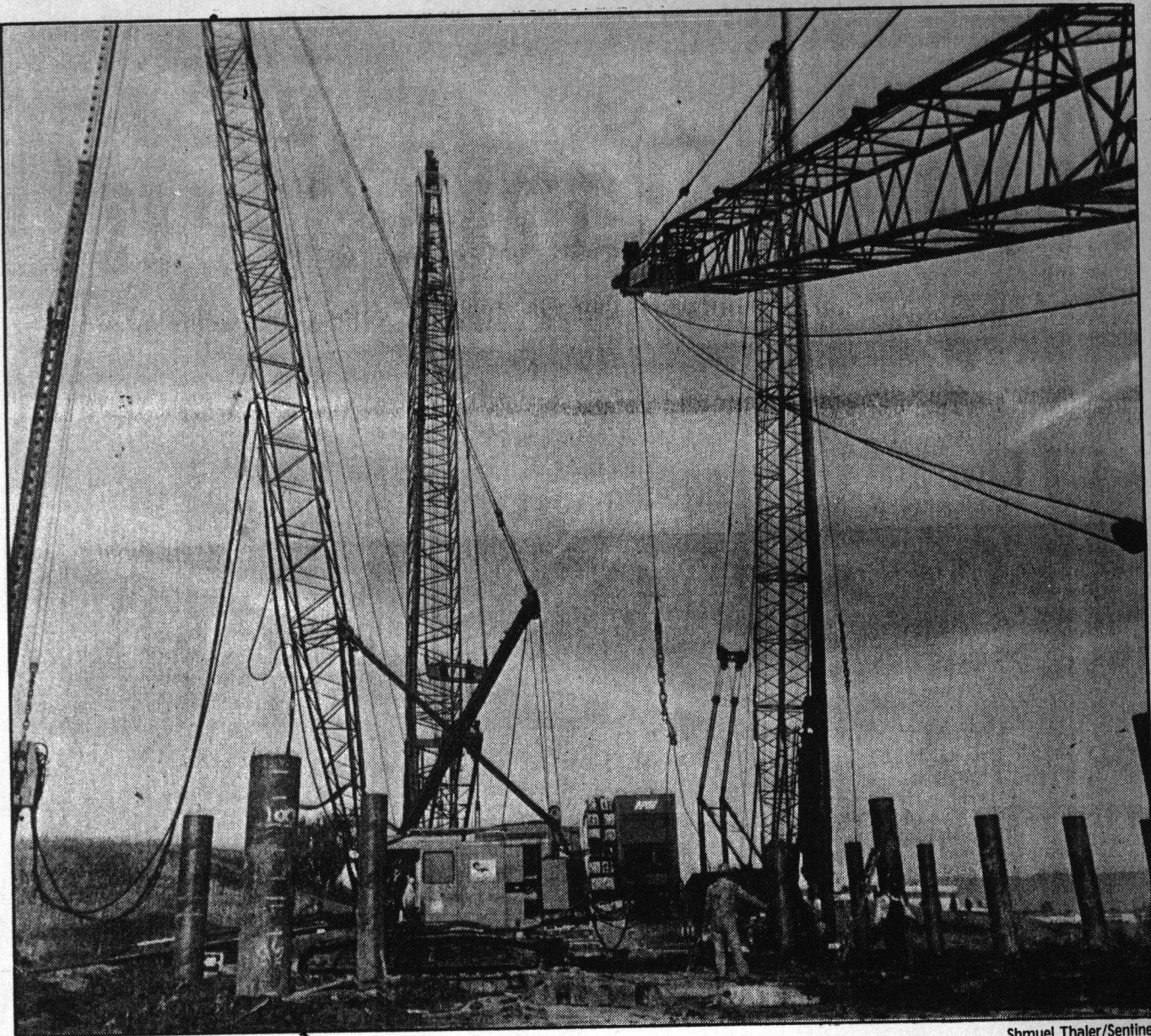


Kerrang!

EARTHQUAKE '89 - Watsonville



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Nighttime construction work on the Struve Slough Bridge is keeping south county residents awake.

Bridge work rattles Watsonville

By TOM LONG
Sentinel staff writer

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WATSONVILLE — Boom! Boom!
Boom! Boom!

Such is the sound that fills this town every night when the sun drops down. It crashes through the dreams of children sleeping in their beds, interrupts the sound of nightly sitcoms, rattles the quiet holiday evening.

Two weeks ago residents here first woke to the sound of heavy metal hitting heavy metal. The sound continued through the night, and has continued through every night since except for Christmas.

"At first I thought somebody was doing something crazy," said Doree Fultz, who lives off Green Valley Road.

Dozens of people called the Watsonville Police Department with the same question: Where is that noise coming from?

The freeway, they were told. Caltrans is working around the clock to repair Highway 1.

The sound that all of northern Watsonville is still hearing is that of gargantuan metal hammers smashing

'In some cases we have two hammers working at the same time ... It just echoes inside the pile itself and then rings.'

— Engineer Ramin Abidi

down upon the huge metal pilings which will eventually support the new Struve Slough Bridge. The old bridge collapsed during the Oct. 17 earthquake.

"In some cases we have two hammers working at the same time," explained Ramin Abidi, resident engineer at the project for Caltrans. "It just echoes inside the pile itself and then rings."

The sound can be heard in the middle of the night by residents as far as three miles from the worksite and is unavoidable for those in the Green Valley area.

"It's just one of those things where you're going to get complaints," said Abidi. "Either you're satisfying the

thousands of people that live around there or the hundreds of thousands of commuters who need the highway."

Even though the police are still receiving complaints about the noise every night, most people in the area have learned to live with the noise.

"It's noisy but it's getting the thing done," said police dispatcher Danna Stephens, who also lives off Green Valley. "It's going to happen and Caltrans isn't going to stop. It's all part of cleaning up after the earthquake."

According to Abidi, the hammering will continue for about two more weeks, if all goes well. The bridge is supposed to be completed and Highway 1 re-opened by the end of February.

But for now, the beat goes on.