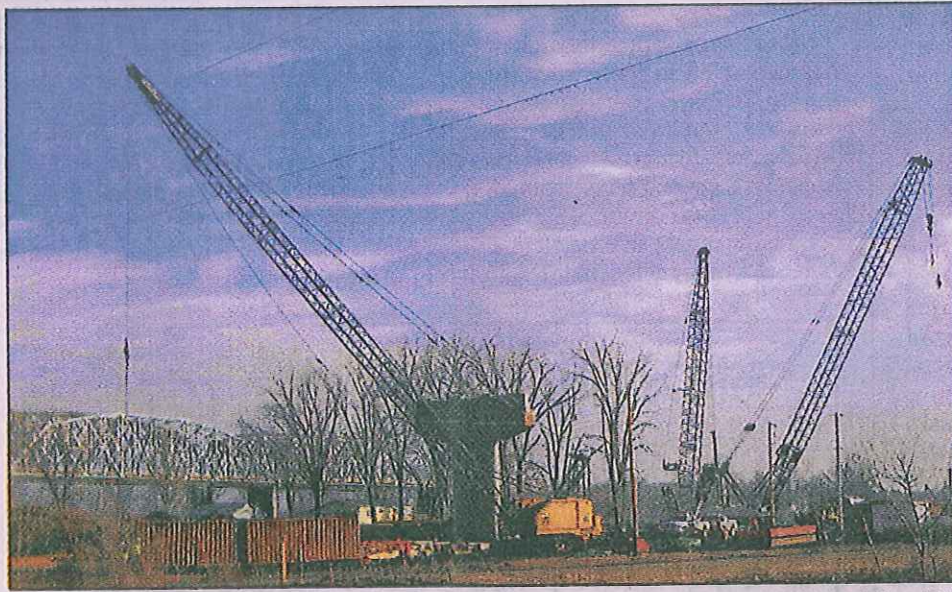


# Rulo residents excited to see new bridge taking shape

By ALGIS J. LAUKAITIS  
Lincoln Journal Star



ALGIS J. LAUKAITIS/Lincoln Journal Star

Pilings for the new bridge at Rulo are going up on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River.

RULO — Like a giant monolith, a bridge piling rises out of the muddy ground on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River.

The concrete piling, soon to become the base for a 1,026-foot-long bridge, is a symbol of better things to come for this struggling river town of 191 people.

Crews have been working since September, making progress despite the cold, snow and mud. Three smaller pilings are up on the Missouri side of the river.

Almost every day, people — mostly retirees — drive out to watch giant cranes do the heavy lifting on the \$32 million construction project.

"It's the most excitement — since I was a kid — that's happened in Rulo," said 70-year-old Jack Sells.

The new bridge will replace one built in 1939. Construction is expected to take two years.

Sells and other area residents say the old bridge is too narrow for combines, cultivators and tractors, and farmers have to take someone along to flag oncoming traffic.

"They can't get their equipment across," Sells said. "A lot of guys farm land in Missouri."

Charlie Radatz, who co-chaired the Tri-State Corridor Alliance, said three years ago that public safety is the No. 1 reason Rulo needs a new bridge.

The alliance helped marshal public, state and congressional support for the project. At the time, Radatz and other backers pointed out that the Rulo bridge had a lower safety rating than the Interstate 35 bridge that collapsed in Minneapolis in August 2007, killing 13 people.

"I think it's a good deal," said Edwin Parker, who has lived in Rulo since 2005.

He said a lot of people from Rulo and

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Falls City use the old bridge to drive to St. Joseph, Mo.

What a new bridge won't do, Sells and Parker said, is bring new jobs and businesses to Rulo.

"Most construction companies have their own crews," Parker said.

"There's nobody working on it (locally) that we know of," Sells said. "Most of the

guys we see have Iowa license plates."

Cramer & Associates of Grimes, Iowa, is the general contractor for the project.

Margaret Rose, manager of the Bridge Bar & Grill that sits on a hill overlooking the Nebraska side of the construction site, said bridge workers come in to eat and drink, and so do some sightseers.

"Hopefully, it will bring in more business," Rose said. "At least this is a positive

thing happening to Rulo."

The Richardson County town gained notoriety for the 1985 torture and slayings of a man and little boy by cult leader Michael Ryan and some of his followers.

So local residents are glad to see something good happening.

Some of them drop in at the Bridge Bar & Grill almost daily to watch the progress from the patio.

Tom Adams, who lives in Falls City, said he drives to

Rulo two or three times a week to visit a relative and stops in to see what's going on with the bridge.

Last year about this time, Adams said, the construction site on the Nebraska side was about 6 feet under water because of spring floods.

"In fact, I was boating out there," he said.

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