

U.S. BRIDGE CRASH: AMAZING PICTURES

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Voice do.

All that remains of Tacoma Bridge. Third largest suspension bridge in the world, it snapped in a light gale. Engineers went over the ruined approach spans yard by yard, probing the cause of the biggest bridge crash in United States history. Steel parted like string; concrete cracked like matchwood. For a time it was feared the main support-towers would fall. They're 400 feet high and are badly deflected.

Always the bridge had swayed alarmingly, most likely because its two sides were not open girders, but steel walls, buffeted by the wind. At Washington University Professor Farquharson experimented with a model of the bridge, up to the hour it fell, seeking a way to lessen wind-resistance.

Opened only last July the great structure became notorious for its sway. Motorists late at night swore they'd never touch another drop. It was called 'Galloping Gertie', and while it was still a joke it was filmed by Paramount News. These are genuine pictures, not trick work. Sometimes it rose and fell several feet.

People came to watch whenever there was a wind. It was good fun. But more than fun was in store now. This was the day it crashed. The centre-span bucked under a 40-mile wind, and with a roar the bridge snapped and fell.

The great span crashed 200 feet. It cost well over a million and it stood less than five months. They'll re-build it when they've agreed on the new design. In usual traffic, scores might have been killed. Yet not one life was lost; no one was seriously injured. And it was fully insured. Indeed, barring the fact that it collapsed, the bridge behaved perfectly.

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November 11, 1940

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OFF-STAGE VOICE---BRIDGE COLLAPSE

1. Title: FIRST PICTURES: ACTUAL COLLAPSE TACOMA BRIDGE

A naked steel skeleton -- the remains of the world's 3rd largest suspension bridge, which cracked and collapsed in a 42-mile an hour wind. Engineers inspect strained cables on the approach sections that remained after the twenty-eight hundred foot center span dropped away. Steel and concrete gave way as the span rocked and swayed. Many observers call it the greatest bridge failure in history. Engineers even doubted that the two 425-foot towers -- upright but seriously deflected -- could be saved. Since it was opened last July, the peculiarities of the six and a half million dollar span were known to engineers. While most bridges have open girders, this span is of solid design. Wind striking the solid sides caused the bridge to rise and fall...vertically...wave-fashion. Severe and unexpected twisting currents brought on the collapse. Up to the hour of the disaster, Professor Farquharson of the University of Washington had been conducting experiments with a model of the bridge. He and his associates sought to devise some method of reducing the wind pressure on the girders as shown here. Now just before the crash...the last scientific check-up on the big Tacoma Narrows bridge. And a remarkable film record of its oscillation under wind pressure. These are real pictures no tricks were employed,...Sometimes the bridge rose and fell a distance of several feet. Motorists complained of becoming seasick. "Galloping Gertie" they nicknamed the span, because of its strange undulation. All this was not (see next page #2)

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unusual to regular pedestrians and motorists--but suddenly the unexpected twisting and swaying and straining and the bridge starts to break up. The aftermath....195 feet below, huge sections of the bridge have disappeared beneath the water. For several ships narrow escapes. The Coast Guard Cutter Atlanta was strewn with wreckage. Twisted, broken ends of the roadbed dangle from the towers. Miraculously, not a single person was fatally injured. The bridge, which was fully insured, was built largely as a defense measure for the Puget Sound Navy Yard. Plans are already underway to rebuild.