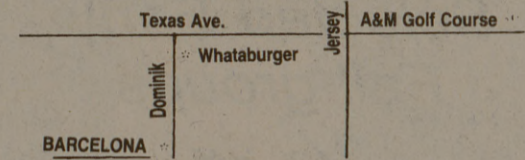


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# Last derailed tank car exploded

United Press International  
MOLINO, Fla. — The memory of a 1977 propane tank car explosion that killed 16 people was on the minds of Louisville & Nashville Railroad officials who urged destruction of the last of nine derailed L&N chemical cars.

L&N officials, who balked at a Texas demolitions expert's advice that no further blasting was needed to eliminate the threat of an uncontrolled explosion at the Florida Panhandle wreck, won out Wednesday when the demolition team exploded the ninth car.

"We're not going to put our people close to it," L&N vice president Kenneth Dufford told a tense meeting of railroad representatives and the Environmental Protection Agency's Regional Response Team earlier in the day.

Al Smith, an EPA representative and coordinator of the response team, reminded team members "there was only one at Waverly."

He was referring to the uncontrolled explosion of an L&N propane tanker in Waverly, Tenn. The tank

car ruptured as workers tried to transfer the propane two days after the 1977 derailment.

"Maybe we are a little more cautious after Waverly," Dufford said.

Nearly 400 area residents, evacuated after 29 cars of the 109-car L&N train jumped the tracks early Sunday, were allowed to return to their homes Wednesday afternoon.

Another 1,500 people were able to return home Tuesday after the demolition team successfully blew up the first eight cars, laden with flammable liquid propane, ethyl alcohol, styrene monomer and acetone.

"As far as I'm concerned, it looked great," Wayne Rutledge, cowboy-booted leader of the demolition team, said after he returned from surveying the wreck Wednesday morning.

But Dufford disagreed and, after the morning meeting, Smith sent Rutledge's team back with another charge.

The response team will foot Rutledge's bill, which is estimated to be between \$25,000 and \$30,000.

"These kind of operations are not two-dollar-an-hour jobs," Smith said.

Although the detonations were successful, Bob Wilkerson, assistant bureau chief in the state Division of Disaster Preparedness, said blasting would not necessarily become a common way of disposing of dangerous cargo of derailed trains.

"We're not proposing that every

time a train jumps a track we're going to blow it up," he said.

As officials were giving the all-clear Wednesday, railroad executives began to tally damages. L&N spokesman Charles Castner said 21 damaged cars and a locomotive probably would be moved and the track repaired by the weekend.

Castner declined to estimate damages, but Smith and Dufford both

said property damage to the area would exceed \$1 million.

Russell Gober, a National Transportation Safety Board investigator, said the accident resulted in an overflowed a culvert and a ditch Saturday.

"This is just an isolated incident. There was no engineering involved far as I can see," Gober said.

## Congress floor fight seen

# Vote lifts food stamp ceiling

United Press International  
WASHINGTON — A House Agriculture subcommittee has voted to lift a ceiling on spending authorization for food stamps in fiscal years 1980 and 1981, but a close vote indicates the issue is far from settled.

Committee staff members said the 5-4 vote by which the bill was approved Wednesday indicated the

issue of a ceiling on spending would be resolved when the full House Agriculture Committee considers the bill.

It also could face controversy on the House and Senate floors.

For fiscal 1980, which began Oct. 1, the administration expects to spend \$8.3 billion for food stamps, 20 percent greater than the \$6.9 billion cost for fiscal 1979. The ceiling is just \$6.2 billion.

In 1977, Congress set ceilings on annual food stamp expenditures to try to put some brakes on the rapidly rising costs of the program. But food inflation and major changes in the program pushed up costs to levels higher than expected.

Congress declined to eliminate

the ceiling for fiscal 1979. It forced to raise the ceiling by \$1 million to prevent across-the-board elimination of food stamps for the month of September.

The legislation would require states to tighten administration of the food stamp program in order to reduce waste and fraud.

It would liberalize medical deductions in determining food stamp eligibility for blind, elderly and disabled Americans beyond what is approved by Congress last year.

It would permit those who can deduct all monthly medical expenses in excess of \$10 instead of \$100 would include medical expenses of the blind, elderly and disabled.

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## Beating wife 'normal' for deputy, judge says

United Press International  
CASPER, Wyo. — A county judge has cleared a sheriff's deputy of beating his wife, calling the physical abuse he inflicted "normal, everyday" conduct for the couple.

Natrona County County Judge Stephen Davidson found Deputy John Mort innocent of an assault and battery charge brought by his wife, Colleen, who filed for divorce the day after the attack. They had been married six weeks.

Mrs. Mort told police her husband struck her face Oct. 18, causing swelling and a cut lip.

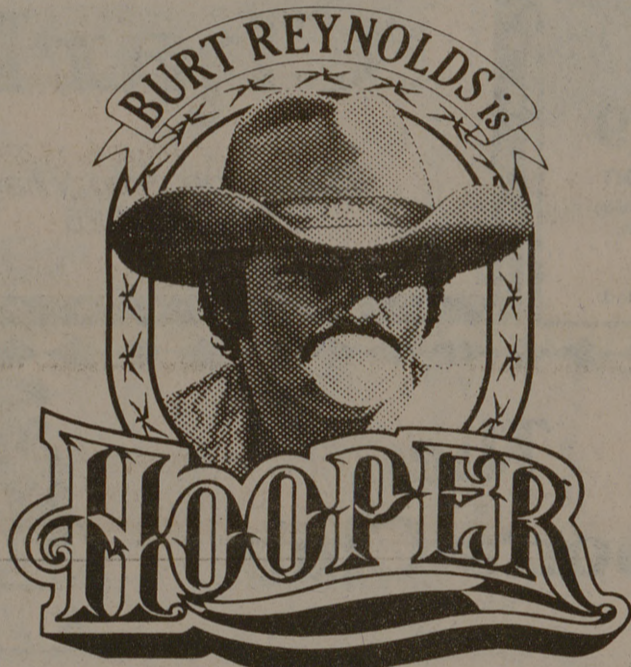
But Davidson said there was no probable cause to believe the deputy had struck his wife "in a violent and angry manner," as the current law requires.

Mort was tried Tuesday. Instead, Davidson said All into account "what's rude" about Mort's. He said the couple's lifestyle "of physical and abuse."

Mort, who had been suspended from the sheriff's force pending the case, will return to duty, Sheriff Bill Estes said.

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