

Train: Daly has big plans for Burning Man and other events

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Known formally as The Society of Forty Men and Eight Horses, the group was named after the boxcars in France that each carried 40 men or eight horses to the front.

Ken Rislow, chaplain for the American Legion's Clatsop Post 12 in Astoria and adjutant for the Forty & Eight since 2006, said the local chapter of the honor society was formed around 1920 along with the American Legion.

The train was originally built in 1945, used for parades and other celebrations and rebuilt several times throughout its life, Rislow said. On the side of the train was written "Clatsop Voiture 547," denoting the 547th Forty & Eight chapter established nationally.

"There was a team of people that worked on it," Rislow said of the train. "That was true until 2010. What happened was all the people that took care of it passed away."

Charles Godwin, the second vice commander of American Post Legion 99 in Seaside, said the train came to South County about a decade ago by way of former commander Al Smith.

"I was just a neighbor and had a shop, and I offered to help him out with it," Godwin said.

He helped fix and restore the one last time and said it ran for several years before coming to rest at a lot in Seaside. The train was eventually towed north by Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin, whose wife owns the Yankee Trader.

"I just didn't want to see it get scrapped," Bergin said.

After finding the train, Daly said, he came down with his clown car and towed it north, first to Hammond and later to Astoria.



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
Jeff Daly stands in front of his latest project in his studio on Tuesday. Daly is remodeling an antique train he bought several years ago to travel on an old RV chassis to be used in local parades and other functions. Find more photos online at DailyAstorian.com

New and improved

Parked in the basement of Daly's subterranean workshop in downtown Astoria is a 24-foot motorhome he acquired in Knappa and had stripped down to the frame. Around it is a insulation board mockup of a seating area and conductor's cabin he plans to install facing backwards from the motorhome's cabin.

Daly plans to build a steel frame, surrounded by a plywood wall sheathed in decorative steel, fake rivets and wood

paneling. A friend in Knappa is recreating the American Legion's original lettering on panels he can switch out based on the use. A metalworker is designing articulated train wheels with a pulley system to mimic a steaming train, backlit by strobes.

On the ground next to the

frame is the original steel train engine. Daly plans to install a barbecue — an idea from Bergin — and machines for smoke, bubbles and flames, along with a metal cow catcher.

Daly plans to check an item off his bucket list and drive the train to Black Rock City, Nevada, for Burning Man in



A mannequin stands in as a mock passenger as Jeff Daly works on his latest project in his studio in Astoria on Tuesday.

August. Once back in Astoria, he plans to again use the vehicle in parades and charter it for birthdays and other celebrations. The attraction will be similar to the Glam Tram, a custom minibus for the Los Angeles Zoo Daly said he saved before destruction and renovated to an open-air downtown taxi, with blasting music and a fake fireplace in the middle.

"I just love the history of the area, and that's why I keep bringing it back, because people are scrapping this stuff," he said. "They were going to

scrap this. The clown car was going to be scrapped. I just hate it, because it's something I remember as a child, and I think many more people are going to enjoy it."

While building the train, Daly has been receiving chemotherapy for prostate cancer. Having projects such as the train provide goals to keep him from getting complacent.

"It turns out I'm beating the cancer more than the cancer is beating me," Daly said. "I'm not going to sit around the house saying, 'I don't feel good.'"

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