

He Moved A Caboose To His Farm

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

How do you move a 28,000-lb. caboose 40 miles to your farm without spending more than you paid for it? That was Darril Clark's problem when he purchased an old 1960's caboose and 30 ft. of track for \$11,000.

What started as a simple project – he wanted to put the caboose in the back yard for his grandkids to play in – turned into a transportation-engineering feat and two years of renovation.

Clark, a retired mechanic in Scappoose, Oregon, recruited friends to help him move it.

"I had a pair of log truck axles, so I jacked the caboose up and took off the train wheels," he explains. "I rolled the tandem axles under the back end and welded them in place. Up front I put in a king pin so I could pull it with a semi tractor."

The width was just 1 ft. over the legal road limit so he could get by with an extra-wide permit. The caboose's 15-ft. height was more of a challenge.

"I cut off the cupola and put it on a flat bed trailer along with the railroad wheels," Clark says. Then, a friend pulled the caboose to Clark's property. He was able to move the caboose into place with a forklift, and then put the caboose back together.

Clark poured eight 4 by 4 by 4-ft. concrete slabs to support the heavy caboose. But he had plenty of work ahead of him.

"I completely went through it and stripped out all the wood and windows. Much of it was rotten," Clark says. "It worked out pretty good because I needed a few new tools, and my wife let me get them to finish this project."

He hired someone to spray the interior with

foam, and then installed plywood over the insulation before finishing everything off in red oak. The caboose was turned into a classy guesthouse.

Clark faced a few challenges. To divide off the bathroom area, with its claw foot tub, string-pull toilet and vessel sink, he put up a wall of glass blocks. Custom furniture was built and assembled inside, because the narrow doors wouldn't accommodate regular furniture. Clark built a spiral staircase to lead to a bedroom up in the cupola.

The caboose is cozy for guests even in winter with in-floor heating under the bathroom portion, a propane heater and in-wall electric heater. While the inside is totally changed, the renovations purposefully maintained the original exterior. Clark hired someone to sandblast it to bare metal, and after making necessary repairs he painted it red.

"I worked on it for two years off and on, as a hobby. It was a therapy place for me to unwind," Clark says.

He enjoyed adding special touches such as rope lights hidden behind an ornate cornice that lights up as little crosses.

"Most people are impressed with all the oak in it," he says. "The grandkids love hanging out in the caboose, but it has attracted more adults than kids." He named the caboose "Jenny's Railroad Express" in honor of his wife.

He estimates he spent about \$20,000 for the complete project and says he is willing to advise others how to move and renovate a caboose.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Darril Clark, 51995 SW Bonnie Lane, Scappoose, Ore. 97056 (ph 503 543-7628).



Darril Clark overcame a lot of obstacles when he moved a 28,000-lb. caboose 40 miles to his farm. He remodeled the caboose into a luxurious guest home.



Custom furniture was built and assembled inside, because the narrow doors wouldn't accommodate regular furniture.

Treadmill Captures Cow Power

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

Willie Taylor says his cows help power his farm and get valuable exercise using his Livestock Power Mill (LPM). The Northern Ireland inventor says animals move at their own speed while they eat from an integrated feeding station.

"If you watch animals when grazing, they eat a bit and then move a bit and then eat a bit and move again," notes Taylor. "What we're asking them to do is move at that pace, just a natural movement. I estimate they could produce between one and two kW per 7-hr. day, depending on the size of the animal."

Taylor sees the LPM being used by confined feeders and bred beef cows as well as dairy. He does concede that some weight gain or milk production might be traded for energy production. However, he also expects a health benefit from the exercise. The welfare issue in countries like Holland could also play a role. Taylor says 24/7 confinement of cows in that country is a growing public concern. "Once we finish some refinements on the working model, we will start animal health and welfare studies," says Taylor. "If you put beef animals on it, the question is will it increase muscle or just increase the cost of gain?"

Taylor hopes to get his system up and running by this coming fall and gather data through the winter. The next step after that will be production. Taylor envisions entire ranks of machines built into animal housing systems. He hopes to get the cost of production down to where a farmer ordering 50 machines would pay around \$1,500 (U.S.) per machine.

Taylor admits that when farmers first see the machine, they scratch their heads. "When

we explained it, they wanted to know how much it will cost and when it's going to be available," says Taylor.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, William Taylor, 55 Letterloan Road, Macosquin, County Londonderry, BT51 4NU Northern Ireland (ph 011 353 44 028 703 43534; taylor.w@btconnect.com; www.livestock-controller.co.uk).

Still in the prototype stage, Livestock Power Mill helps power Willie Taylor's farm. Animals move at their own speed while they eat from an integrated feeding station.



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