TRACK HOME

A train-loving father and his daughter remake a 1951 sleeper car

By **Margaret Foley** ■ Photography **Paula Watts**

ABOVE: With its banquette seating and lounge chairs, the rail car's living space is cozy yet comfortable. "Traveling this way is definitely an experiment in small-home living," says Katy. The easy chairs are by Ekornes.

RIGHT: The rail car contains many of its original features, such as this dinner chime that announced meal times.

Fred Gullette and daughter Katy stop in Portland as part of a cross-country rail trip that took them from California to Washington, D.C., and back. "We'd talked about buying a car for years before we decided to do it," says Fred. "I'm glad we did, because there's no better way to see the country than from a train."

For Fred Gullette and his daughter, Katy, the best way to travel is by train. In fact, they enjoy riding trains so much, they purchased and rebuilt their own private rail car, a 1951 Budd sleeper car, to provide the comforts of home when they travel.

Their love of trains began early. "I was working out of Chicago in the 1960s, and I had to travel through the Midwest and the East," says Fred, a semiretired bookseller based in Portland. "I could board an overnight train that would take me where I needed to go. In the summers, my wife would take our children on the train to California after school got out."

Because Fred and Katy plan to use the car for both private and charter trips, the car's interior needed to be reconfigured. Before buying the rail car in 2010, Katy, who owns motels in Moab, Utah, had worked as staff on private rail cars, and she planned the redesign of the 10-by-85-foot car's interior. "I had a definite idea of what would work and a plan on a napkin the day it was purchased," she says.

A double compartment in the back half of the car was remodeled into a tiled shower. Eight front compartments were removed for a colorful green kitchen with full-size appliances and a separate social area with a large table, lounge chairs, a bar and television. "I worked frequently in a car where all the refrigeration was in the kitchen, so if a guest wanted a beer, they had to come in," says Katy. "I wanted to create an area where guests could do self-service to relieve the stress on the kitchen."

In its current configuration, the rail car sleeps 12 people in five double compartments and two single compartments that have all

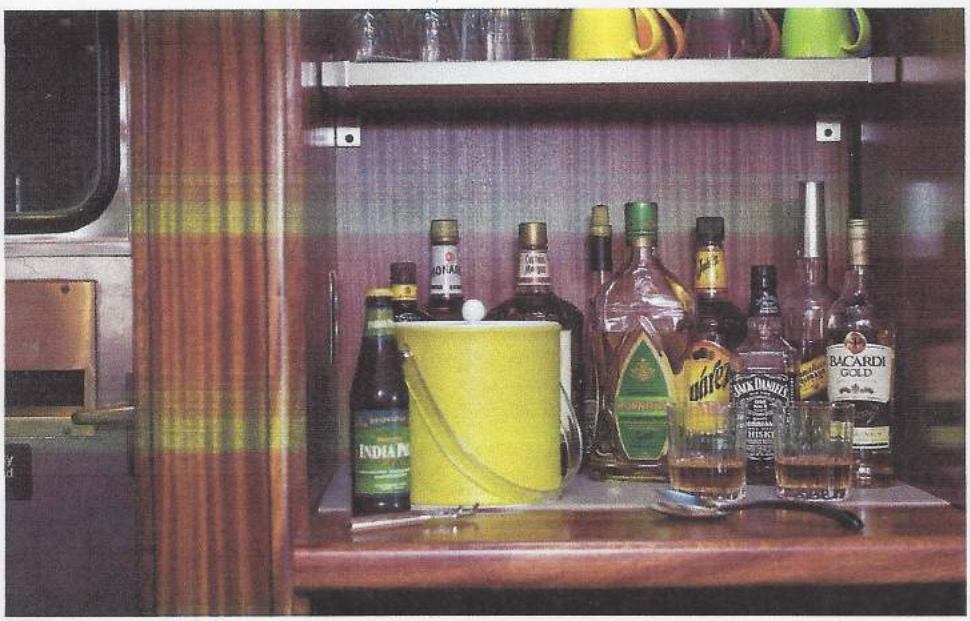
LEFT: During the day, the seats provide a comfortable place to watch the world go by. RIGHT: The wall hook is pulled to release a single bed that folds over the seat. The bedding is from Ikea. ABOVE: A fold-out sink makes it easy to wash up.

their original furnishings and charm, such as fold-down sinks, in-compartment toilets, pull-down beds and large armrests. "I like that the rail car is ours," says Katy. "I know where everything is. I like being able to walk around barefoot and enjoy the space while I'm traveling. There are more opportunities to be entertained than on a plane. There is nothing not to like about being on a train."

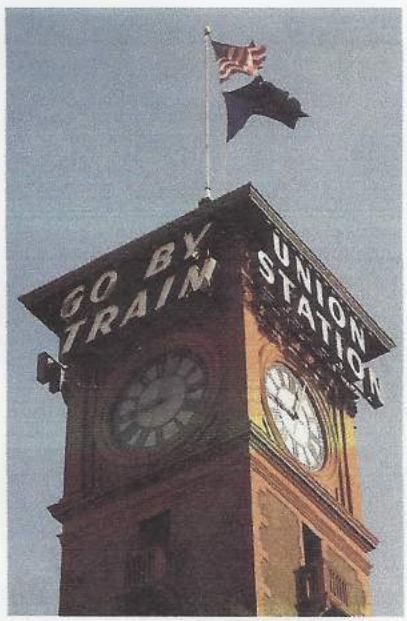
Since the rail car, dubbed "Pacific Sunset," was finished in April 2012, Katy and Fred have been on three trips: the inaugural trip from the South Carolina railyard where it was renovated to its home base in Oakland, Calif., a trip to Canada and a trip throughout the United States. Fred and Katy coordinate with Amtrak to arrange when and where their private car will be attached and detached from trains on Amtrak's routes.

For Fred, a great appeal of train travel is the scenery along the routes. "The West has some of the most spectacular train routes," he says. "Going from Portland through the Columbia River Gorge, you have great views of the Oregon waterfalls and mountains. There's also a remarkable piece of mountain railroading between Eugene and Chemult. Everybody should ride the train and see what's out there."

Katy, who likes bright colors, chose the compact kitchen's color scheme. "The kitchen has two distinct work areas, so more than one person can be preparing food," says Katy. "Things can shift when you're on a train, but you can close everything up if you need to." The faucet is from Hansgrohe.



A small, fold-out bar in the living area makes it easy for guests to serve themselves. "I enjoy being able to have a wide variety of comestibles and spirits," says Fred.



The sign at Portland's Union Station sums up the Gullettes' travel philosophy.