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American Legion Post 76,

21 November 2009

I would like to Thank Post 76 and Commander Miller for allowing me to address those who attended the Post Social. For those who were not able to attend, I would like to give a little insight into our organization, which is very directly related to the members of Post 76 in many ways.

The titles and symbols of the Forty & Eight reflect its First World War origins. Americans were transported to the battle front on French trains within boxcars stenciled with a "40/8", denoting its capacity to hold either forty men or eight horses. This uncomfortable mode of transportation was familiar to all who fought in the trenches; a common small misery among American soldiers who thereafter found "40/8" a lighthearted symbol of the deeper service, sacrifice and unspoken horrors of war that bind all who have borne the battle.

The Forty & Eight was founded in 1920 by American veterans returning from France. Originally an arm of The American Legion, the Forty & Eight became an independent and separately incorporated veteran's organization in 1960. Membership is by invitation of honorably discharged veterans and honorably serving members of the United States Armed Forces.

Post 76 has had some very notable members of our Voiture Locale such as Adolf Hohertz, whom some of you may remember. Adolf's extraordinary dedication helped preserve our organization's history and maintain the French "*Merci Boxcar*" which is located on the grounds of Post 76. The boxcar was relocated from Camp Mabry in the early 1950s due to the Korean War in an agreement between Post 76 and the Forty & Eight. The boxcar has an amazing history of its own and since it arrived in 1949, the Grande du Texas has been the guardians of the "*Texas Merci Boxcar*". The Grande du Texas is planning to take the necessary steps to properly display the boxcar (plaques displayed year round) so that everyone may enjoy the splendor and significance of this piece of American military history.

As the Chef de Train for the Third Division, Grande du Texas and Chef de Gare for Locale 175, I would like to invite those interested in the Forty & Eight to meet with us at a Special Promenade to be held at Post 76 on Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. We are looking for individuals who, as many you have, displayed their continued dedication by service to their community, state and nation. New members will be required to meet a fundraising goal, learn about the organization, and attend an initiation ritual. We do not just sign people up! We seek those who will be active participants in 40 & 8 functions, primarily the annual pilgrimage to the "*Texas Merci Boxcar*" which is held in February of each year.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at 512-736-2377 or [djk3002@yahoo.com](mailto:djk3002@yahoo.com) . You may also visit the Grande du Texas website at [www.texasboxcar.com](http://www.texasboxcar.com) for more information.

For God and Country,

David J. Knutson, Chef de Gare  
Travis County Voiture Locale 175