

# The Rocking Chair Racers

By  
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Well good morning to you! It's a beautiful warm morning here in Countryside Junction. We are gathered under the shade awning that extends out from the storefront windows of Doc and Lou's shops and over the raised wooden walkway that goes past all the shops and businesses on this side of Main Street. There's also a walkway on the other side of the street, but we're on this side, and that's all that matters. Sitting under that awning, in front of those two shop windows, on old straight-backed rocking chairs, are the town's finest ne'er-do-wells, malingerers, and raconteurs, "The Rocking Chair Racers."

Howdy all, my name is Ben Thayre, and I'm your narrator here in the Junction. I'm retired now, but in a younger day I was an egg peddler, a butter churner, a chicken plucker, and a spittoon polisher. Now I just freely associate with my contemporaries in those rocking chairs. Please note there is little difference between my current lifestyle and my past one.

Lou Swyer owns "The Clip Joint," which is a tonsorial (and tasting) parlor, where for only \$1.50 you can get a shave and a haircut, all the latest scuttlebutt, and a taste of Doc's latest batch of "liquid hair invigorator." (One taste is a hair-raising experience.) The shave and haircut are optional, especially the shave. Right next to Lou's shop is Doc Syde's drug and hardware store called, "The Pill and Hammer." It's a quietly held secret amongst us "gents" of the town that Doc runs the finest small batch, corn-mash still in these parts, right down in the basement of his shop.

Each batch of "liquid amnesia" has to be sampled for taste and quality control. So Doc devised a covered, copper sampling pot at the outlet of his still for just such purposes. Attached to the pot is a long clear plastic tube that runs through the basement wall, and up

through the floor of Lou's shop, into the bottom of a stationary bottle with a hand pump on it. The bottle has a label which says, "hair fertilizer." Lou dispenses tastes of Doc's craft into small paper cups from the seemingly never empty bottle.

A wall-mounted electric fan does its best to keep the smells, from the assembled group without, from mixing with the aromas coming from within Lou's shop. Seated immediately outside Lou's door, and to the left, is Uncle David. His given name is David N. Goliath, but we just call him Uncle David. He's not related to anyone around these parts though. Seated next to Uncle David is Mason Wall. We call him "Stony." Whenever someone asks him to go somewhere, or do something, he just pulls his hat down over his eyes, leans back in his chair, and says, "nope, done that." Then there's our town constable, Heathrow Uppe. Next is the town's mayor, Phillip Buster. And last, but not least, is Judge Knott who presides over the courthouse a few doors down the walkway. Not everyone shows up every day. In spite of some strongly held opinions in this town, we do have our chores to do, and some of us have more to do than others.

There is a six-inch diameter circle on the bed of the walkway, in amongst an ugly array of errant tobacco juice stains, caused mainly by bad aim. That circle is the exact spot where Lou sets down his spittoon. When that happens, it signifies that The Rocking Chair Racers first race is about to begin. We call it "target practice." The object of the race is to be the first one to loft a wad of tobacco juice square into the open mouth of the spittoon. It wasn't long after Lou set the spittoon down that a metallic but watery "splotch" was heard, followed by a shout of "BULL'S – EYE" from Uncle David. That, which we call the first race, was over.

Izzy Stiffe, the sexton over at the The Wholly Impetuous Theological Spectators church, has just stopped by to say hello. In addition to being sexton, he is also a well and gravedigger for the town. He never has a lot to say and is very soft spoken when he does. He is the younger twin brother (by three minutes) of Boise

Stiffe, the town undertaker, who owns “The Just Deserts Funeral Parlor.”

Uncle David is the first to notice the pair of very dark sun glasses under the deep bill of Izzy’s baseball cap and asked Izzy, “Why the glasses?”

Izzy very softly said, “You know how warm it’s been around here lately, right?” We all nodded yes. “Well, yesterday I was sitting in church and, as you all know, we do a lot of standing and sitting during the service. There was this poor young thing sitting in front of me whose filmy skirt kept getting caught in her hind end cleavage when she stood up. She tried to wiggle and jiggle the skirt free without being noticed, but she wasn’t having any luck. So in trying to be a good Christian, I reached down and pulled the skirt out for her. She didn’t appreciate my help, and she wheeled around with a haymaker and whopped me right in the eye.” Izzy then removed the sunglasses to show us two very black and swollen eyes.

Uncle David winced a little, started to snicker, and then asked, “So what happened to the other eye.”

“We got to the part of the service where everybody says something nice to everybody else. Try as I might to apologize to the young lady for my mistake, she just wasn’t having any of it. I then reasoned to myself, ‘Izz, you’ve just got to make amends for the wrong you did.’ So I reached down and tucked the skirt back in. She turned around, all right, and gave me a haymaker in the other eye.”

We all laughed until we took to coughing and wheezing. Doc stood up, grabbed Izzy by the wrist, and declared him the winner of the second race. Then he took Izzy inside for a little “liquid pain reliever” and first aid.