

Lou Louder

A Tale of our Town

By Damon Runyon

LOU LOUDER was a bartender. He tended bar in the Greenlight saloon.

He was tending bar there the night Shalimar Duke was killed.

Lou Louder was very tall, and very thin, and very pale. He said he was sent to Our Town by a doctor in Buffalo, N. Y., to die. Lou Louder had tb.

Lots of people used to come to Our Town to die. The doctors in other parts of the country highly recommended the climate.

Shalimar Duke was the owner of the Commercial Hotel. He was a short, fat man. He was one of the most popular citizens of Our Town. His books showed that more than twenty-eight thousand dollars was owing him on old accounts when he got killed.

Shalimar Duke married a Mexican girl half his age, named Pabalita Sanchez. Her people had a big sheep ranch. She had beautiful black eyes and black hair and an awful temper. She was like her mother, Juanita Sanchez. She was like her aunt, Maria Gomez, too.

Pabalita was pretty fly, but how could Shalimar Duke know that? He was forty-seven years of age.

The two Baker boys, Joe and Sid, had a fight about her and quit speaking to each other. This made it inconvenient in their business. They were partners in the B. B. coal yard.

Each thought Pabalita loved him. She told them so.

Shalimar Duke went into the Greenlight saloon one night and was talking to Lou Louder when Sid Baker came in. Sid had a .38-caliber revolver in his left hip pocket. Sid was left-handed.

Shalimar Duke asked Sid to have a drink. About that moment, Joe Baker came in. He had a .44-caliber revolver stuck in the waistband of his pants.

Shalimar Duke asked Joe Baker to have a drink. Shalimar Duke didn't know the Baker boys weren't speaking to each other. Shalimar Duke didn't know about the Baker boys and Pabalita.

He was the only man in Our Town who didn't know.

JOE BAKER and Sid Baker were gentlemen. They accepted Shalimar Duke's invitation to have a drink, even though they didn't speak to each other.

Joe Baker stepped up on one side of Shalimar Duke, Sid Baker stepped up on the other side. They were all as close together as your first three fingers. Lou Louder was in front of them behind the bar.

It was a hot night. The side door of the Greenlight, directly opposite the bar, was standing open to let in a little breeze. The breeze brought in the perfume of some roses growing at the side door of the Greenlight.

It was a strange place for roses to grow.

Roses were always growing in strange places in Our Town.

There was no one else in the Greenlight saloon at the time.

Shalimar Duke and Joe and Sid Baker all called for straight bourbon. The Greenlight served good bourbon to its regular customers.

Shalimar Duke stepped up on the foot-rail of the bar, so he was up higher than the Baker boys, and Lou Louder, too. He raised his glass, and said "Here's how," and they started to drink when Shalimar Duke fell to the floor dead.

A big-bladed knife with a very heavy handle was sticking in the back of his neck at the base of the brain.

His blood ran out in funny little rivulets on the floor.

He never said a word.

Joe Baker was arrested by Sheriff Letch and taken to the county jail. Sid Baker was arrested by Chief of Police Korn and taken to the city jail. The jails were about a mile apart.

They found a .32-caliber revolver in a side pocket of Shalimar Duke's coat. Some said maybe he had learned about Pabalita and the Baker boys, and was out looking for them when they beat him to it.

THERE was much indignation in Our Town.

Lou Louder was questioned by Coroner Curley. Lou Louder said he had turned to the back bar after serving Shalimar Duke and the Baker boys with their bourbon, so how could he see just what happened?

Coroner Curley said, "That's right, Lou."

A number of citizens went to the county jail and broke down the door and took Joe Baker out and hanged him to a telephone pole. Joe said it was all right with him. Joe said he was the one who stuck the knife in Shalimar Duke. Joe said he wanted to get rid of Shalimar Duke so he could have Pabalita to himself.

Joe said, "Boys, I deserve my fate."

The telephone company afterwards complained because the hanging broke some of its wires.

Joe Baker really thought Sid killed Shalimar Duke. Joe was trying to save Sid by taking the blame on himself. Joe remembered that Sid was his brother.

He didn't know that about the time they were hanging him a different crowd of citizens was taking Sid out of the city jail and stringing him up to a girder on the Union Avenue bridge, and that Sid was confessing that he jabbed the knife into Shalimar Duke.

Sid said he did it so Pabalita would be free to love him alone.

Sid Baker really thought Joe killed Shalimar Duke and was trying to save Joe as Joe was trying to save him. Sid remembered that Joe was his brother. He remembered what fun they had together when they were little kids.

IT WAS all very confusing to the citizens of Our Town when the stories were compared after the funerals.

Some said it showed that blood is thicker than water.



Lou Louder was tending bar in the Greenlight saloon the night Shalimar Duke was killed

A SHORT SHORT STORY
COMPLETE ON THIS PAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROBERT O. REID

There were many arguments about which of the Baker boys really stuck the knife in Shalimar Duke. Sheriff Letch had a fist fight with Chief of Police Korn about it. Sheriff Letch said his prisoner, Joe Baker, was the more truthful of the Baker boys, and must have done it, because he said he did.

Chief of Police Korn stood up for Sid Baker.

Pabalita Duke ran the Commercial Hotel for six years after Shalimar Duke's death. She died of pneumonia contracted while keeping a date with a traveling man in a snowstorm.

The first thing she did was to try to collect Shalimar Duke's old accounts.

She never was very popular in Our Town.

LOU LOUDER lived thirty years longer. Before he passed away he told Doc Wilcox that when he turned to the back bar after serving Shalimar Duke and the Baker boys with their bourbon, he saw, by the back bar mirror, Pabalita step to the side door of the saloon and throw the knife that killed Shalimar Duke.

The knife wasn't meant for Shalimar Duke. It was meant for Lou Louder. It would have got him, too, if Shalimar Duke hadn't stepped up on the foot-rail of the bar as Pabalita let fly.

If Shalimar Duke had remained standing on the floor, the knife would have cleared his head and hit Lou Louder kerplunk in the back between the shoulders.

Lou Louder said he had quarreled with Pabalita and had written her a note telling her he was through with her. She got awful mad about it. Shalimar Duke found the note and went into the Greenlight saloon to kill Lou Louder.

He was mentioning his intention to Lou Louder when the Baker boys came in, Lou said.

Shalimar Duke stepped on the foot-rail to get up high enough to have a freer crack at Lou Louder, so Lou thought.

THE Baker boys had also gone into the Greenlight saloon to kill Lou Louder, so Lou told Doc Wilcox. They didn't know each other's idea because they weren't speaking. Pabalita had told them, separately, that Lou Louder had insulted her, and made each of them promise to kill him. They both mentioned to friends that they were going to kill Lou Louder, and the friends warned Lou.

Pabalita had no confidence in the Baker boys.

Lou Louder remarked to Doc Wilcox just before he died that he always felt he had rather a narrow escape that night.

He didn't die of tb.
He died of old age.

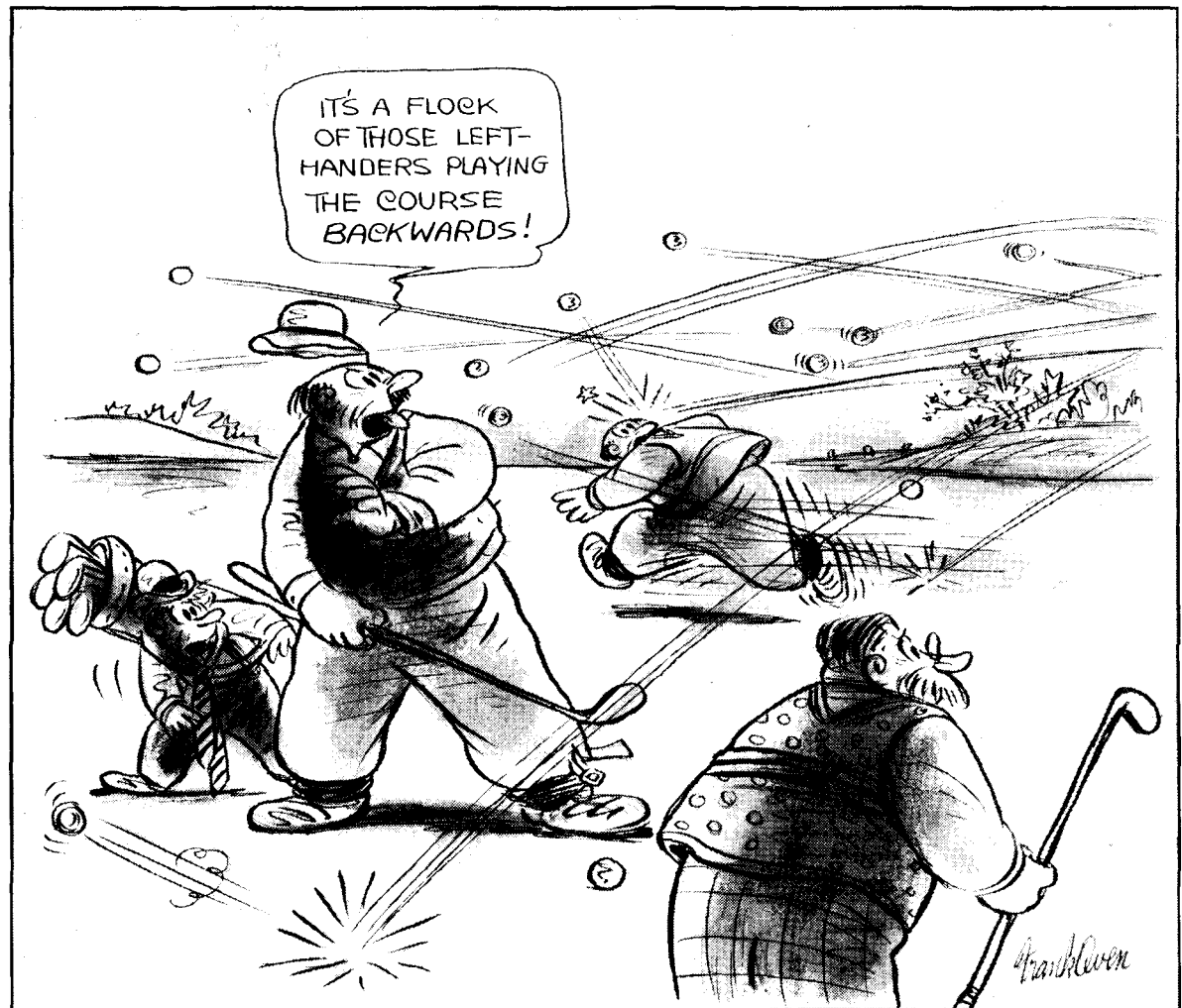
The Chamber of Commerce of Our Town often pointed to Lou Louder during his life as an example of what our climate will do for a man.

Left Turn

Our southpaw golfers are up in arms—left arms. Tired of being treated as outcasts and men without a country club, they have started a national association of their own with tournaments, banquets and everything

By
Quentin Reynolds

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK OWEN



Golf-course hazards lie to the left of fairways because most players are right-handers



Right-handers deny the merits of instruction by left-handed pros

THIS is a story that begins in Florida, touches briefly at Catalina Island and rests for a while at St. Louis, but where it will end up I don't know because it is a story about left-handed people and any time you have anything to do with left-handers you can never tell what will happen.

Some years ago, the Brooklyn baseball team was training in Clearwater, Florida. A gentleman walked into the lobby of the hotel where the team was staying and he was very proud and beaming all over the place. It developed that he had just shot a gaudy 79 on the Clearwater Country Club course and he was very loud about his accomplishment and he quite disturbed the slumber of the ballplayers who were, as usual, getting their money's worth out of the big soft chairs in the lobby.

"They tell me that these ballplayers are pretty good at golf," the expansive gentleman suggested very loudly. "If any of them would like to pick up a dollar or two, I would be glad to oblige by wagering that I could beat any ballplayer on this club."

From the depths of a large soft chair came a soft but penetrating voice. "Who is that guy making all that noise? Why, I could beat him shooting left-handed."

The loud gentleman turned sharply and walked to the sleepy figure. "You can beat me shooting left-handed? Listen, ballplayer, any time, for anything, and I'll give you odds."

The match was arranged for the next morning and to make a long story short, the player, whose name by the way was Frank O'Doul, shot a 74, won by seven strokes and collected enough on the wager to treat his teammates to ice cream sodas.

"If he shoots a 74 left-handed, what must he shoot right-handed?" his bewildered opponent said after the match. "He must be a wonder."

"The man you were playing is named Frank Lefty O'Doul," someone informed him coldly. "And he does everything left-handed. Yes, he plays golf left-handed, too."

"But I never heard of a good left-handed golf player," the gentleman protested.

"You have now, my friend," he was told and that ended the incident.

So what? So maybe you never heard of a good left-handed golf player either, but there are many of them in this land of greens and bunkers and after many years of being ignored, being frowned upon and considered social outcasts, they have organized and from now on you will hear a great deal about them. Almost anyone can play golf fairly decently if he is a right-hander, but a left-handed player must be just a little better than his colleague who hits the ball from the orthodox side. Golf courses, left-handers insist, are built for right-handed golfers.

Stand on any tee and look down the fairway. You will see white-sanded bunkers raising their ugly heads about the green but you will see most of them to the left of the fairway. Now, the most common faults of golfers are, of course, the slice and the hook. A slice means that a ball veers sharply over to the right. A hook means that it veers to the left. Ninety-eight per cent of all golfers are slicers. If the bunkers were all to the right of the fairway, these golfers would spend half of their time digging out of bunkers and traps. So the golf architects obligingly designed the courses with most of the bunkers to the left where only a hook will find them. A hook is a comparatively easy defect to correct and a right-handed golfer of ordinary skill will not find it difficult to keep out of these traps.

Now, consider the left-handed golfer. Like his right-handed colleague he, too, has a nasty habit of slicing. But when he slices the ball, instead of veering to the right it veers to the left, down there among

the pestiferous bunkers. Thus he is penalized by the bunkers to a greater degree than is the right-handed golfer. That is what I mean when I say that golf courses are designed for right-handed golfers. It would be absurd to say that the courses should be designed for left-handed players. For these comprise but a scant five per cent of the golfing fraternity. However, even five per cent of the golfers of the country would total well over a hundred thousand.

That, at any rate, is the contention of the left-handers. Orthodox golfers sneer at what they call an alibi for mediocre southpaw performances. This is the reasoning of the left-handed brethren. Take it for what it is worth and if it seems faulty be charitable, for, after all, left-handed people must be humored a bit.

Rebellion in the Locker Rooms

For years the left-handed golfers have suffered in silence; have stood the furtive locker-room glares of their right-handed brethren; have had to be content with ill-matched, poorly assorted clubs, but now they have rebelled and to celebrate their rebellion they are holding a tournament of the national association of left-handed golfers early in September in St. Louis. The Moses who is leading the left-handed players out of the golfing wilderness is Ben Richter, left-handed himself, but still one of the best professional golfers in the game. Richter is responsible for the movement and it is all because at the age of twelve he used to be a left-handed pitcher for the Ben Miller Junior team in the Trolley League of St. Louis.

He pitched left-handed and he was good too. When he wasn't playing baseball he was caddying on the links of the Algonquin Country Club. Like all caddies he'd fool around on the links when there were no customers. He told his fellow caddies that he was going to be a great golf player when he grew up but they only laughed.

Well, in time he did become a good amateur golf player. One day he was playing on the links of the Triple "A" Club in St. Louis and his partner was Sidney Maestre, president of the club and a St. Louis banker of considerable prominence. Richter was playing well and he casually mentioned to Maestre that he was thinking of turning professional. Maestre cheerfully told him that he was crazy.

"What club would hire a left-handed professional?" he wanted to know.

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