

Eric Evaluates

Let's hear it for the givers – not the takers!

by Eric Blair

There are two people I would give my right arm to meet.

The first, Hideyo Noguchi, was a Japanese bacteriologist, revered today in Japan, even though his many failings are largely ignored. Sadly he died in 1926, and as I won't be meeting him any time soon, I'll not bore my public with the reasons behind that one.

The other has no name – or at least no name known to yours truly. The individual I refer to is the person who said something along the line of “if people are attacking you, then you must be doing something right?”

If that be the case – my last piece here on the hallowed pages of SFM is / was / forever will be comparable to the spoken word of the Lord, for I was hammered, truly hammered by at least a portion of the the gaijin fanbase of this wonderful, wonderful sport.

I understand my Ed received more than a few mails – primarily from people based in Germany, Austria and Holland. None were warm and fuzzy. Most were aggressive and insulting, and one, as I understand has been mentioned elsewhere, was even offering a meal if only the writer could meet me! What am I – a panda?

Bizarre indeed but atypical of the lack of humor in those reacting to my wit, my uncanny observations, my expertise on all things sumo!

None of your precision Siemens engineering in his head of mine – just a jumbled maze of wires and switches that sometimes work in tandem, sometimes don't. But when they do, and when the

creative juices start flowing – OMG!! Ever heard the lyrics of the Queen song – Don't stop me now!

Winston Churchill once said something like “Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed to so many by so few” In a sense, these words from the great man ring true in sumo – and especially in the world of sumofandom (new word!).

How many out there on the WWW really give it up for the greater good of the global sumo following community?

The unrivalled, multilingual staff of SFM do! Those ladies and gents behind our closest challenger, Le Monde de Sumo do, the admin chaps running Sumo Forum, Sumo Mailing List and even the bottom of the intellectual garbage heap, Sumo Talk – lads who CAN take a ribbing – and give it too, all of them do – to an extent!

In all there are very few though – even on the discussion boards. Take away a few of the main posters on SF / SML and ST and you are left with very little in terms of contributions – opinions galore it must be said – but original contributions? Not much!

So, while Churchill was of course referring to the boys of the British Royal Air Force, their allies, and their battle to hold off the might of the German Luftwaffe at the beginning of World War II, during the Battle of Britain, in the end, quality outshone quantity did it not?

This is always the case on the dohyo – quality rises to the top, and, in my own opinion, when his

career is over, will have shown Hakuho, quality wise when held up for judgment alongside Asashoryu (irrespective of the eventual number of yusho both lay claim to) to have been a better yokozuna.

The same will always ring true in real life, and just like the vastly superior numbers of the Luftwaffe were sent packing back to their bully boy boss, so too will those who berate and even envy the experience of those fortunate enough to be up close and personal with sumo as it is – an integral part of the culture of a nation, that nation being Japan.

Thanks to the Internet, the drive-bys with their flush of passing interest have opportunities like never before to appear as if they know what they are talking about, but time will tell.

'Sumo' – the very word still has the power to raise the hairs on the back of my neck at times. This far down the road, many years into my own watching of the sport and over 20-years since first seeing it, how many of those with the energy to attack whilst offering little in the way of contribution to the aforementioned greater good, will be around in another five or ten years?

Most of those who sent letters to complain about my last piece are takers, not givers, most Johnny-cum-lately types to whom I will pose a question; What exactly do you contribute to the sport of sumo? Little or nothing?

Writers in any and all of the online foreign language magazines that cover sumo – Sumo Fan Magazine

of course, Le Monde de Sumo, the recently expired Le Boletín de Sumo and even the remaining (are there any) staff of Sumo World as was, as well as the photographers, translators, backroom staff and so many others associated with these mags give it up – for the majority.

Kintamayama over on the Sumo Forum is second to none and forever gives it up – time and effort above and beyond the call to bring to non-Japanese eyes his translations from the Japanese press. Does he make gaffes? Yes, of course he does, but sumo is not his job, translation neither so he deserves the slack.

SFM's Joe Kuroda gives it up –

offers a great deal by way of his SF rikishi comments as does our layout whiz Olivia with her day-by-day coverage of the heya and lower division torikumi. Add to this their contributions on SFM. Makes you think.

The list goes on and on of course, and my being worthy of inclusion is indeed debatable, and many may prefer not to add my name.

Be that as it may, do those most vocal detractors of my own see their own names up there in lights? Be honest now....?

It would of course be interesting to know if those so willing to attack any and oftentimes all of the

contributors out there in Japan and beyond, those that 'give it up' have it in themselves to offer as much?

If you do, make a push for the top. Contact the editors and admin staff operating all the online publications and see how you can help 'spread the word, spread the gospel of sumo'

If not, just appreciate that which you receive and be grateful for those making the efforts – on your behalf, for you, because you can't – or won't – go that extra mile.

Now, back to this book I have an idea for – main character's name is Winston.