

Menko Corner: Lighter Side of Menko

by Ryan Laughton



#12: Caricature Gone Bad
1954 Caricature 7



#11: Really?
1954 Rokakuke 8-9



#10: Watermelon Anyone?
1956 Tsuriyane 7-8-9



#9: The Pot of Chanko Nabe
1957 Marukami Sensou 6



#8: Really again
1957 Sanenchi Straight
11-12-13



#7: The Expression
1957 Yamakatsu Dai Gunbai
6-7

Sumo tradition and history is clearly unique. I know not of any sport where fans can get as close to the athletes as in sumo, sitting within several feet of rikishi in practice, shouting encouraging close-range 'ganbatte' as they enter the arena. Inside the arena, meanwhile, many fans sit barely a few feet from hundreds of pounds of rikishi waiting for bouts. Also, has any sport documented its practitioners' lives in as much detail? From chanko nabe to practice, from jungyo to honbashi, and from fan clubs to heya life, sumo fans appear to share a unique insight into the world of their heroes.

Unsurprisingly, this has led to some interesting moments captured on sumo menko. Not all of them are funny or amusing. Some are merely the uniqueness of sumo captured forever on cardboard. Some are just wrong-

time, wrong-moment snapshots.

Would you, for instance, buy a basketball card of Michael Jordan eating a steak? A football card of Bret Farve reading a book? A baseball card of Derek Jeter in a bathtub? Read on and you'll see what I mean. Now in chronological order based on manufacturing date is the Top-12 of the 'Lighter Side of Sumo Menko.'

#12: Japanese anime and manga artists are world-famous for their artistic abilities. However, when doing a caricature of someone, it's wise to use this person's good side. Unfortunately, although accurate, Maegashira Otachi's side-profile is hardly flattering.

#11: Editor: "We have one day before production... I need an action pose of Tochinishiki and Otachi on the double."

Copy Boy: "I took this last week at the Natsu Bashi."

Editor: "How can you tell that's them?!"

Copy Boy: "I can tell Tochinishiki's thigh and buttocks anywhere!"

Editor: "Perfect!"

#10: I'd love to pose with a watermelon on my shin-ozeki menko. Or maybe it's a bowling ball?

#9: It used to be that baseball stars would visit heya for some good company over a pot of nabe. Now rikishi head over to the Big Egg to throw out the first pitch instead.

#8: Copy Boy: "Hey Boss, I found another great action shot!"
Editor: "Perfect, the other one was such a success."

#7: I'd be scared too!



#6: *Bad Hair Day*
1957 Yamakatsu Dai Gunbai 6-7



#5: *The Fur Coat*
1958 Doyusha Kiku 7



#4: *Kids Will Be Kids*
1958 Marukami Kimarite 6



#3: *Bath Time*
1958 Marukami Kimarite
Bromide 6

#6: There seems to be a photographer around every corner.

#5: Even in 1958, man fur and touching up photos wasn't outside the realm of sumo menko.

#4: Kids are kids no matter what nationality.

#3: Do little kids really want this on their menko? Maybe it'll make their menko perform better in battle.

#2: By my estimates, only 2% of all menko have rikishi smiling and I have never seen a rikishi smiling in their kesho-mawashi. Half these two percent have rikishi smiling

with the Emperor's Cup, leaving only 1% smiling at other times. Yokozuna Chiyonoyama holds the record for six smiling menko.

#1: What better a way to get in the zone than with a Japanese manga? And does it look like Wakamisugi wants to kick some reporter's butt?



#2: *The 1%*
1959 Maruo Uchu 7



#1: *Reading Your Rights*
1959 Marusho Tawara 5