

Claims Department



Mitsuharu Misawa: 1962 - 2009

When I discovered Japanese Professional Wrestling (or Puroresu, sometimes just called Puro), it was the mid-1990s and All Japan Pro Wrestling was the big bad, the best promotion in the world. It's hard to explain how good it was. They weren't the flashy, high flying feds that were making all the impact in the US at the time. There weren't flyers like Rey Misterio or The Great Sasuke, but All Japan understood how to put together the big matches, how to use big, high-impact moves to make an impression.

They also understood that the audience reacted when someone got dropped on their head.

There were suplexes and powerbombs and the most dangerous versions of these had special names. The Ganso Bomb, the Tiger Driver 91, the Dangerous Backdrop Driver, all of them were regular moves that saw a guy picked up and placed neck-jarringly down to the mat on his freakin' melon. It was brutal to watch some of these, but the matches themselves were amazing. They had drama, build and psychology. The stories they'd tell were simple, but they were delivered in such a way as to make them feel complex, complete with physical nuance. They were epic battles, and there was a moment in each when it was time

for someone to get dropped on their head. If they didn't recover enough to kick out when the other guy pinned him, that would be completely understandable, and if they managed to kick out, they were super-human. It was amazing. Those who say that wrestling is a stupid fake sport need to watch how they did things in All Japan in the 1995 time-frame.

The leader of this crew was named Mitsuharu Misawa. He was the one that Shohei Giant Baba saw as the future of All Japan and he groomed him, gave him the Tiger Mask gimmick, the gimmick that had launched Satoru Sayama into the atmosphere, and made him into a star. Though not a superstar until he unmasked and challenged Jumbo Tsuruta for a match.

Misawa died on Saturday the 13th of June, 2009, in the ring. He took a relatively safe back drop, what Americans would call a back suplex, from Akitoshi Saito. He hit his head on the mat. The move pretty much destroyed his spinal cord, leading to cardiac arrest and his death in the ring. He was the biggest star to die in the ring because of a move. It would be unfair to say that Saito's move killed him. He had been taking bad bumps onto his head for years, and it was discovered after his passing that his C2 and C3 vertebrae



were destroyed, and not all from that one move. Misawa was the President of Pro Wrestling NOAH, the follow-on to All Japan that Misawa founded in 2000, and he was the biggest name, even if he couldn't perform like he did in the 1990s. He never took time off, he never went to the doctor's to check on the varying pains he suffered. In the end, it was a part of what killed him. The injuries of two decades of big matches where he'd take huge, jarring

suplexes had piled up. It was a sad ending, but he died in the ring, the way so many people have joked so many stars who stayed long after their peak would go. Misawa actually did it. He was 46.

I've loved his matches, and like everything in my life, there was more tied-up in them than just the matches themselves. These were magnificent stories, as vibrant as anything a Soap Opera ever did and as honest about the human spirit as any Ibsen or August Wilson play. The story of Misawa pulls so much weight behind it, but it can best be told through matches that moved me, made me believe, made me think, made me feel.

Mitsuharu Misawa vs. Jumbo Tsuruta – June 8th, 1990

This was the first big match for Misawa after he had himself unmasked. For six years he'd been playing Tiger Mask, had some classic matches, and he had Kawada unmask him and then tossed the mask to the crowd. It made him larger than life, one simple move. He was the hottest ticket in wrestling, and from the moment people started arriving to Tokyo Budakan, people were chanting 'Misawa! Misawa!' and there was the feeling that this was the start of the road, that Jumbo was going to win again and that would set up Misawa having a long run at trying to beat Jumbo, probably the best big show wrestler in the world at that point. He was a legend, a massive star, and a victory over Jumbo was something that could be chased for years and people would buy tickets to see it in hopes that it would happen. The audience wanted Misawa to win, but no one expected it.

That's the best thing about a sport that has good writers: they can make the impossible happen.

The audience sat through the show and when Misawa and Tsuruta came to the ring, the crowd was electric. The match was amazing, with everything you'd want from a match in that point in history. Jumbo was a master of making every move count, and Misawa cer-

tainly picked that up from him in the years they worked against each other. The big spots included Jumbo giving Misawa the Backdrop a couple of times. It was dramatic and Misawa managed to turn a Jumbo pin attempt into a pin of his own and got the win.

If you want to understand what this meant to the folks in the audience, I'll simply repeat what my pal Yoshi said about it: 'Misawa became God that night'.

I've been told that you can't really get the feeling from watching the tape, you'll see that it was a great match, but there was so much more going on and you can tell that the crowd was being pulled along into a world where the impossible, Jumbo losing, could happen, but never really believing it until the moment that it happened. I watched it for the first time in 1993 or 94, but I rewatched it in June



of last year. There's a moment where there's a shot of some of the people in the crowd, right after the finish, and you can see people crying, tears streaming down their cheeks as they're chanting 'Misawa! Misawa!' and the atmosphere reminded me of the greatest moment I'd ever been a part of, when the Keri Strug nailed her final vault attempt. You can watch it on TV and it says something, it's still powerful, but there in the moment, surrounded by people who wanted nothing more than to see her pull it off, it was incredible. In reality, you get those moments once or twice in a lifetime, and if you're there, you've witnessed a miracle. In my lifetime, only the US's Gold Medal at Lake Placid and Strug's Vault are the only things that hit that mark. There are times when the

set-up is there, like the Yankees in the World Series in 2001, just a month or so after 9/11, but real reality just got in the way and they lost the Series.

In the semi-reality of wrestling, you can build these moments very easily, and you can draw emotion, but it's rare even in that world that something like this happen: the moment when you beat even the hardened expectations of jaded wrestling fans.

Mitsuharu Misawa, Kenta Kobashi and Toshiaki Kawada were collectively known as the Super-Generation Army. They ruled All Japan for nearly 10 years.

Jumbo Tsuruta, Masanobu Fuchi, & Akira Taue vs. Mitsuharu Misawa, Kenta Kobashi, & Toshiaki Kawada – April 20th, 1991

Tsuruta led the old-timers group. I think they had a better name, but I always thought of them as the old-guard, especially Fuchi, and the team of Misawa, Kobashi and Kawada featured three guys who were becoming the best workers in the world. Kobashi was the guy who always had to do the job, the guy who got pinned. While Misawa was not a guy with great facial expressions, Kobashi was the one who had the greatest facials in the sport, followed closely by Kawada, who was also one of the best expression wrestlers you'll ever see, and also an amazing athlete, probably even better than Misawa. This was a 6-man tag team match, which were used as a way to continue feuds without giving away the one-on-one contests that drew the big crowds to Budokan. There were probably 50 matches between these teams, or variations of them, and this match made all the rest look like child's play. This was the greatest.

Intensity just drips from every moment. The opening is Akira Taue giving Kawada a couple of forearms before the bell has rung. It's a pretty standard thing, happens when heels (bad guys) start matches all the time, but

Kawada, the number 2 face, goes nuts, pulls Taue down, gets the UFC mount and rains down punches and slams his head into the mat. That's within the first 20 seconds of the match. It's the way to start a match, to get the audience into it.

Misawa is at his peak, working his 1990s style at a time when it was unknown, and he was not yet too injured from years of working these matches. While his psychology might have been better in the later years of his life, here his physicality is at its peak. Kawada is feisty, brutal, he makes every move he has to take look like it'd kill a normal human, and he is no mortal in this match. Kobashi and Taue both play the lessers in this match. You knew that one of these guys was going to be the one to get pinned, but you weren't sure which one.

I never understood All About Eve until I saw this match. This was the explanation of all of that, of having your place, of holding it against all challengers, of passing out of your peak and on the downslide, meeting that challenger who is just as good as you are, but has developed new tricks, new ways of working. That's the overall sense of the Tsuruta-Misawa feud, but here there's more. Kawada is turning into a pitbull, going after the respect he knows he deserves and seeing that he has to go through Taue and Fuchi to get to Tsuruta. They'd eventually have a match, but Tsuruta would hold him off. Kobashi is proving that he belongs; Taue as well. Jumbo is the star, one of the greatest workers in the world, trying to stay at the top, even though he's been knocked back by the younger star. It's an amazing match to see all of that play out.



Toshiaki Kawada vs. Mitsuharu Misawa- July 29th, 1993

I saw this match during the Christmas Break of my freshmen year of college, sitting in my house alone. It was literally a dark and stormy night and I had bought the tape off the internet. I was sitting on the couch at good old 718 Pritchard Court, having sat through some crappy New Japan Pro Wrestling, and then you saw Misawa entering through the crowd in his green jacket. This was the match that was designed to make the Kawada-Misawa feud personal. They'd had many matches before, tag team matches and a few singles, all of which Misawa won. He was the bigger star because he was better looking and Giant Baba had always treated him like a son. The two of them had heat both on the stage and behind the curtain, as Kawada was not happy with his position behind Misawa. And while it wouldn't blow up until a bit later, it was obvious that was the case.

Misawa and Kawada were friends in High School, with Misawa being a huge influence on Kawada, being a year older. The two came up together, Kawada joining up a year after Misawa with All Japan, and Kawada's star grew, but it was obvious that Misawa was the favorite son. This story plays out here. The two had stopped teaming, as they had for years in the battles against Tsuruta (who had Hep C and had to mostly retire at that point) but he had started teaming with his former rival Akira Taue and was probably the top Heel in All Japan, though that's not fully accurate either. It would be fair to say he was contra Misawa, but not actually a villain. Misawa was teaming with Kobashi and the four of them had some legendary tag matches, but the reality was, it was Misawa vs. Kawada.

This match was brutal.

The Kawada-Misawa matches are all the proof you need that one must sacrifice greatly to

achieve legend. In this match, there are suplexes that are brutal. Neither guy was in bad shape yet, but these matches really show why they both ended up all broke-down.

This match was a part of an important story that played out over the next decade. Misawa was the star and Kawada was portrayed as (and probably was) the better athlete. Misawa was nearly the same age and Kawada felt that he was being over-looked. They were two stars trying to determine which would lead the way. There's no question that Misawa over-shadowed Kawada, but what wasn't as obvious was what the two of them stood for. Kawada was stiff, his shots were hard, and he was more reserved, stoic, until he snapped and started punching from the mount and driving your head into the canvas. Misawa was the pretty boy, the master scientist, and in this match, that all broke down. Kawada was going for broke and was an arrogant heel. Misawa let it all hang out and after Kawada did his Step Kicks, where he pushes a guy's head down and give it little kicks that look really painful, he popped back up and gave the same thing right back to Kawada.

Oh yeah, it was on.

This match more than any other displays what the future of wrestling in Japan would be. It was high impact, it was amazing, it featured big moves, and most of all, it featured the kind of physical variation on a mental chess game that you don't expect to find in wrestling. It was amazing. There was also hatred, and you can divide the Kawada-Misawa feud into two sections: before this match, and after.



Misawa wins. He looks the worse for it afterwards.

I really can see fandom in this. There are those who rose at the same time and somehow got along, only to fall out and work to one-up each other. One has the fanbase on their sides. I'm betting from this much of the description,

you can fill in some names to the roles. It's the psychology of this feud that made it amazing... well, that and people being dropped on their heads.

I watched this one, our old top-loading VCR handling the playing, and when it was over, I was almost in tears. I had just witnessed something that I can not explain. I rewound the tape and rewatched it. Emotional would be the word. Even though I'd seen it, knew the big spots, knew the ending, there was nothing I'd seen before in it. It was as if I'd been watching a completely new match, something I'd never seen. The performers, they were amazing. You don't watch this match nearly as much as you experience it. Even on tape, this match was powerful and I watched it with a friend who wanted to become a wrestler and her words immediately after it was over: 'That's the kind of wrestling I want to do.'



Akira Taue/Toshiaki Kawada vs. Kenta Kobashi/Mitsuharu Misawa - 6/9/95

The single greatest tag team match in history. That's probably the only way to do justice to this one. This is a match that takes several story to the next level. It's like a continuing storyline on a TV show that concludes by answering the big question, but leaves so much available for the next year. It's when Kawada finally pins Misawa. It's the finals of the Real World Tag Team Tournament and it's also for Misawa/Kobashi's Double Tag Team Titles. That's how high the stakes are. Taue and Kawada are the heels, the best in wrestling at



that moment, but they're also beloved by the crowd. Kobashi is the lowest man on the totem pole having never pinned Kawada and I don't think he'd even pinned Taue by that point. He is Misawa's partner, and he's got his leg all wrapped up after compiling a great many injuries. Kawada and Taue want this bad, and in a way, the crowd is rooting for them, though they love Kobashi and Misawa. It's an amazing environment.

Kawada is unhuman in this one, probably by design. He is almost expressionless for much of the match, but there are flashes. When Kobashi tosses him into the ropes, he takes a moment to plant a kick into Misawa's face, sending him flying to the floor. That leads Misawa to tag in and he and Kawada do a series where they block each others' moves until Misawa sends Kawada to the ropes and he gives the same kick he gave to Misawa to Kobashi.

This is how intense it is. These guys are playing up their story, making everyone in that audience understand that there are things at stake, things they already know are up in the air, but showing what it means to them, the characters. The fact that this is similar to what it means to them the people is secondary.

This has one of the most incredible segments in the history of wrestling. Kobashi is the youngest guy in the match, the one who has never pinned any of the others in a match, and he has to step up after Misawa is repetitively punished by Kawada's kicks. Kawada dropped Misawa in the corner and fired in kick after kick, even pushing the referee away so he could deliver more. Kobashi then has to become

Misawa's protector. He does everything he can. Misawa gets caught in Kawada's submission move, the Stretch Plum, and Kobashi has to beat on Kawada several times before he'll let go. Kawada is that rabid for his win. The bad guys start to work over Kobashi's knee as Misawa tries to recover. Then it's back-and-forth until Taue hits the Nodawa, his finisher, off the apron onto the floor. At that it's all over as Kobashi tries to save Misawa by tossing his broken form on top of him. It's almost heart-breaking. Kobashi is limping from all the damage the guys have done to him and then Kawada set up Misawa for the PowerBomb, but Kobashi lunges and grabs Misawa's leg, taking kicks from Taue, but he won't let go. He will save Misawa and their tag titles. Kobashi has little left, but everything he has he will give to save Misawa. When Kawada is stomping on Misawa, Kobashi throws his body on top of him, leading the bad guys to drag him off, give him their finisher and that leaves Kawada with Misawa.



This match is more of a western than anything else. The man will have his moment. Kawada will get his pin over the man he's been chasing for years. He keeps kitting finishers, backdrops, jumping kicks; none of them work. Then he manages to hit the Folding Power-Bomb, places his weight directly over Misawa, who is folded in half, and to their left, just an inch out of arm's length, is Kobashi, held down by Akira Taue, desperately trying to grab Misawa's leg. It's amazing. It's more drama than you'd ever expect to find in a wrestling match, and it's powerful.

I can't tell you how many times I've watched this match, but I can tell you this: it is an experience. You can find it on YouTube (along with many others of the matches I'm typing about) and if you thought you could never appreciate wrestling, this might be the match that'll change you mind.

Mitsuharu Misawa was a Japanese National Champion in wrestling in High School. Kawada followed in his footsteps. Jumbo Tsuruta had been a champion in High school too, in addition, Jumbo went to the Olympics

Toshiaki Kawada vs. Mitsuharu Misawa – May 1st, 1998

There's a lot to this match that proves that simple things are the most powerful. After a solid, somewhat spectacular, match, Kawada wins. Afterwards, it's not Kawada jumping up and down having won the match, but he stands up and holds his arms over his head, staring forward and then says, according to at least one site that gives us a translation, 'This is the happiest day of my life, and I'm glad that you were here to experience it with me!'

This was the biggest show in the history of All Japan Pro Wrestling. They'd been waiting years to hold a show at the Tokyo Dome, where New Japan, the main rival to All Japan, had been doing shows for about a decade, but All Japan had never run one. They set this one up for May 1st, 1998. They put Kawada vs. Misawa on top, Kawada still never having beat Misawa one-on-one for the Triple Crown Championship. Kawada had pinned Misawa as a part of the Championship Carnival, the major tournament, but he had never beat him for the title. This was the right time, and Misawa was banged up from his reign as Champion, so it wasn't nearly as good as it could have been if both guys had been at their peak of perfection. It was a little late, it would have been even huger two years prior, but this was still great.

There was nowhere near the drama that the other matches had, but the ending was simplicity itself. If you've ever won an award,

Misawa wrestled in 24 5-Star matches (as rated by the Wrestling Observer Newsletter), more than any other wrestler ever. He had one as Tiger Mask II.

there's a difficult decision. You have to figure out how you're going to present yourself. You can be over-come with emotion, and that's how I'd probably take it, or you can give a prepared speech. I've not got a lot of experience for it, though I have written acceptance speeches for others who have won. The simple raising of the hands was so simple, so pure that it really set the whole thing off. He didn't need to do anything more; that was all that was needed.

This was the start of the slide for Misawa. He was hurting, there's no question, and though he had matches on the level of his 1993-1995 matches, this was kinda the end of the Misawa as The Greatest. This was also the end of Kawada as Misawa's Number One opponent. Kawada fought Misawa many more times, but there was nowhere else for it to go. Kawada had pinned Misawa, that made them equals, even though Misawa was always placed above Kawada in the pecking order. This made it more important to put someone new in the mix, and that turned out to be the perfect choice.

There was one other important Kawada-Misawa match, in January of 1999. Giant Baba, the man who started All Japan, who was Misawa's father figure, who was a larger-than-life figure and a world champion, lay dying in a hospital and watched a video of the match. He declared that it was the best match he'd ever seen. He died a week later.



Kenta Kobashi vs. Mitsuharu Misawa – October 31st, 1998

Kobashi is the perfect wrestler. Many Japanese journalists would talk about how he was the perfect wrestler. 280, solidly muscled, amazingly 6'2 and the most expressive facials in wrestling. He had charisma to spare. Misawa had nearly as much charisma, was solid himself, and could fly around the ring and take huge amounts of punishment. So could Kobashi, something he proved in 1993 by being beaten from pillar to post by everyone from Stan Hansen to Akira Taue, but there was something about Misawa that made him seem indestructible.

Kobashi as an opponent made even more sense than Kawada. The two of them were rivals, much like Kawada and Misawa at the start, but they weren't enemies. The latter Kawada-Misawa matches were built around the hatred between the two, something that never developed between Misawa and Kobashi.

This match also happened to be shown on the TVs of a local Japanese restaurant in Boston while I was living there. I used to go there all the time, at least every Friday, and hang out with the regulars, almost all of whom were Japanese. I'd go to the end of the Red Line, pick up a copy of the Gong, the Japanese wrestling magazine, then head back to Boylston to hang around and watch what would usually be the latest Sumo tournament followed by New Japan. That week, it was All Japan's latest Budokan show. I was watching it surrounded by Japanese guys, Japanese guys who would chant the names of the wrestlers. The Main Event started just as I got my Ton-Katsu.

I'll probably not make it to Japan at any point in the near future. Far future, maybe, but certainly not the Near. This was as close as I would ever come to seeing a wrestling show with a Japanese wrestling crowd. I was there, nearly jumping off the chair when Kobashi got a near fall, and I was there when Misawa got the win, the ref's hand hitting the mat for the third time, the crowd erupting, the restaurant turning into a mad house for a few moments. There was a loud 'Misawa! Misawa!' chant.

Kobashi had been beaten, he had pinned Misawa once, in a tournament match, but not for the title.

The crowd at the restaurant was nuts, and after Misawa had done his bit, Kobashi got up and the place gave him a round of applause. It was an amazing match. It was an amazing atmosphere. It was one of those moments.

Misawa held many titles, including being an All Japan Triple Crown Champion 5 times and Pro Wrestling NOAH GHC Champion 3 times.

Mitsuharu Misawa vs. Kenta Kobashi – March 1st, 2003

To understand this match, you have to understand aging, hurting, falling from the peak but still having the desire to go and be on the top. I had never experienced that. To this day, I can honestly say that I've never achieved to a level where it would matter if I was less than I could be at it. The pain of not being able to stay on top must be terrible, and having to perform at a top level when it's really above your level any more must be painful, both on the body and the soul.

But sometimes, it's magic. Sometimes you get a George Blanda, a guy who everyone said was done but came back and had a season where he could have been MVP. Sometimes you get Roger Clemens, a pitcher people were counting out as being almost good enough for the Hall of Fame, who then got traded to the Yankees, won a bunch of World Series and ended up playing another ten highly successful years.

This match was that kind of moment.

Misawa was out-of-shape, probably pretty close to 300 lbs when he was rarely anything over 240 during his peak. Kobashi's knees were shot, and less than two years prior he'd been told that he needed to retire because of how bad his knees were. These were two guys who were past their prime.

And they had perhaps the greatest match of their careers. Maybe. The fact that both of them were no longer in their physical primes meant that they would be showing more with every thing they managed to pull off. They could tell a story of coming back to their primes and every time they took a big bump, you had to wonder if they could shake it off. But they did, right up to the end.

Misawa was the biggest star and had been



the top star because he thought he was the only one who could carry the company. He was the President of the company and he thought he had to be the one to keep it going.

Kobashi and Misawa went through with an amazing match. The two of them popped out all the matches from their arsenals, with classic moves going back and forth. Misawa popped out his old Tiger Mask Elbow Suicida, a dive through the ropes to the outside to deliver an elbow smash to the face of the guy on the outside. A few moments later, Misawa went for a dive off the apron, but he ended up crashing into the retaining railing and splitting open his chin. Sometimes, these little things end up adding to a match, and the trail of blood running down his chest was such a moment.

The understood the audience, they really did. They teased Misawa giving Kobashi a Tiger Suplex from the apron to the floor, a dangerous move even for young stars, but Kobashi blocked it. Eventually, Kobashi ended up taking the move when Misawa got it later, and the two of them barely beat the twenty count to get back into the ring. Kobashi ended up getting a Burning Hammer, his finisher, and that allowed him to pin Misawa. It was the same move he used to beat Misawa the first time Kobashi got the pin.

The place went electric, the entire crowd was insane with the victory. It was the passing of the torch and Kobashi was the Champion for two-plus years of success, both with drawing people to the shows and in the quality of competition. Misawa took a beating in the match, and then he took a backseat, working in the middle of shows, not working as the star every night. He would get back into the mix as the top star after Kobashi got cancer and left for nearly two years. Misawa wasn't what he once was, but he still took big moves and he wasn't able to work the amazing matches. He had a few pretty good ones, but for those two years, he wasn't the star anymore.

This was the last 5 star match that Mitsuharu Misawa ever wrestled. It wasn't the last time he faced Kobashi, but it was the last time they put on such a show. It was the passing, and I remember saying immediately after I saw it for the first time that this was the last

great match for Misawa. It was obvious that he was laying it all on the line, that he must have given all his fighting spirit for that one shining moment.

It is also the most bittersweet of matches for me to watch. How can you watch someone going all out when you can see that it's the end coming for the guy. It hurts watching it sometimes, and I've watched this match at least 50 times, and 5 times in the days since Misawa's death, and it's that magic moment that you relive, but the further you get from the date, the sadder it is knowing that it'll never be back, that it'll never be that good. This was the last super-human match I saw. Yes, there have been great matches, such as Kurt Angle vs. Shawn Michaels at WrestleMania, but there's never been a match with all the elements. It's sadder now because Misawa is gone, and even a broken down Misawa is preferable to a dead Misawa.



Mitsuharu Misawa and Go Shiozaki vs. Aki-toshi Saito and Bison Smith – June 13th, 2009

This was the match where Misawa died.

I've not seen the entire match, but I've seen many pieces of it that have ended up on YouTube. No one has shown the moment when Misawa comes crashing to the mat, but there's the video of the team working on Misawa, his leg shaking, the entire lockerroom coming out to see what's going on and the entire crowd both stunned and yelling 'Misawa! Misawa!' again, trying to will the life back into his body. He says he can't feel anything, then loses consciousness. That's the way the life of the greatest wrestler ever to live ends.

And there's the talk about his spirit.

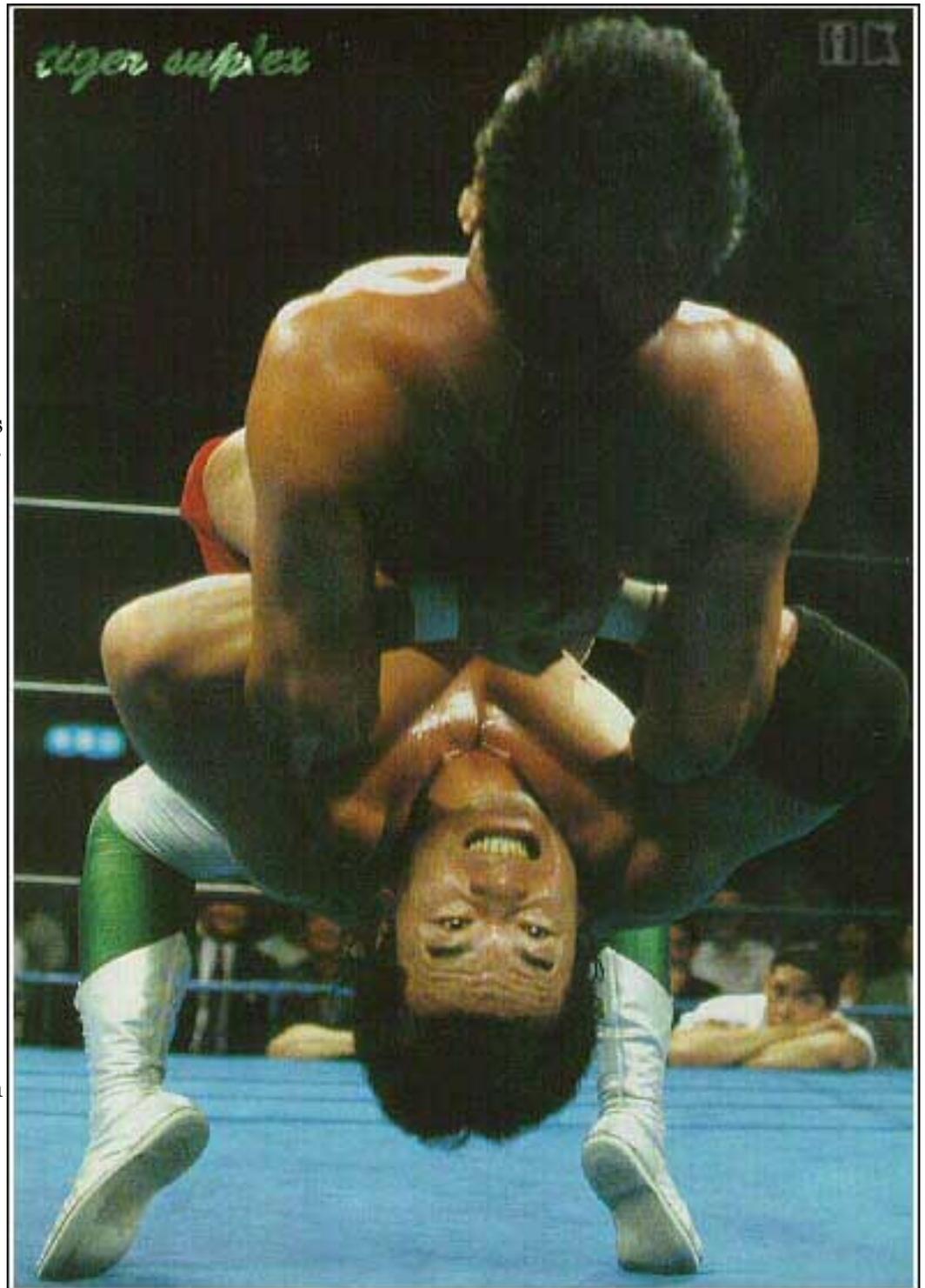
Some folks said that it was the right time and place for him to go. He wasn't an embarrassment yet, he just wasn't as good as he had been back in 1997. I don't know. I know that there are men who have said that they want to work until they pass out after having an amazing match and just go. There are people who never think of the possibilities, never think of how it will end, who believe that they're the one the rules don't apply to, even the ultimate rule: this too shall pass.

Wrestling deals with death all of the time. There have been over-doses, moves gone awry, murders, heart attacks and you could go on. There used to be car accidents every year because the guys were driving from town-to-town to wrestle, usually with little to no sleep. A guy dying in the ring happens from time to time (former All Japan wrestler Gary Albright died in the ring) but never any worker of the quality of Misawa, or a star of his magnitude, had passed away in the ring. Pro Wrestling NOAH announced that Misawa died at the hospital, though almost everyone agrees that he was dead in that ring. Though many people have died at Disneyland, they've only had to say that people died there twice, claiming they always died at the Hospital. We all create our own truths, almost always to protect ourselves.

Mitsuharu Misawa is dead. He was one of the greatest to ever work in his profession.

You can make a lot of parallels to writers over the years. A few good novels, then a string of masterpieces, then a slow decline. If that kinda sounds like Kurt Vonnegut, it's what I was going for.

And so, I close this special tribute to Mitsuharu Misawa with a quote: A man may outlive his legend, but no man outlives his destiny. In this case, Misawa's legend will remain, but the man met what was waiting for him.



Accounts Receivable

Let us handle some LoCs on the Ditmar Claims Department, and with that, let's start with the man himself!

Chris,

Well! Claims Department is on eFanzines, and looks great! And, once again, I'm very flattered by the full-page write-up you've given to my graphics. Many thanks, indeed...

I still owe you for having sent me that wonderful DVD of images! It was the first thing of art I found after my computer crash and if I had lost it, I'd have been most unhappy.

A couple of things.

The illo on page 6 - meteor about to wreak destruction on poor old Oz - is being used by Bill Wright for 'his' foundation Meteor, a non-profit organisation which he has set up for the preservation of Science Fiction. You'll find full details on the site:

<http://www.meteor.org.au/>

If you think Meteor is a 'Good Idea', would it be worth your while to give it a plug in your 'zines? I'm not involved in it, except marginally (helping Bruce Gillespie and Bill Wright to maintain the site), The main committee members are on the page:

<http://www.meteor.org.au/whos-who/>

there's a brief mention of Bruce and me on: <http://www.meteor.org.au/whos-who/consultants-to-the-committee/>

I've briefly mentioned it in an issue of The Drink Tank, though I'll probably pass another mention of it in the near. It's a great idea and I should've recognized the image from Interstellar Ramjet Scoop since I'm pretty sure he ran it in

an issue a while back!

I indulged myself a bit in a back story to Non-Standard Spaces on page 12 of Claims Department when Bill Wright used it for Interstellar Ramjet Scoop for December, 2005.

Ah, I knew I was remembering right!

On page 17, the background is the Trifid galaxy. I like the SF connection...

Once again, MANY thanks for fanning my ego...

And once again, thanks for all the fantastic work! I am so pleased I got to run all of that fantastic art!

And of course, there's also Bill Wright, Australian FanEd extraordinaire and the guy who introduced the work of Ditmar to my eyes!

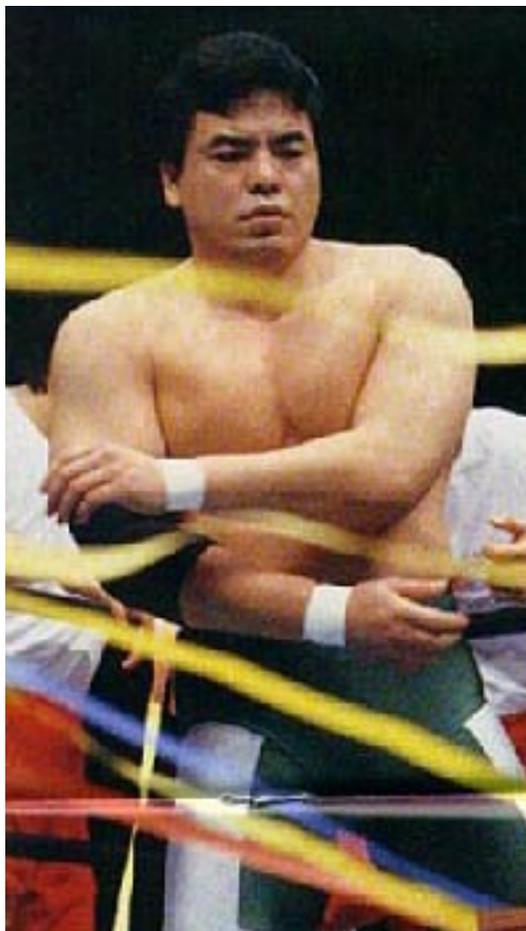
Chris,

Ditmar has been at me to look at Claims Department #9 since it was posted on eFanzines on June 4th, 2009, and now I realise it's

because you've dedicated the entire issue to his artwork. I don't know how you do it, but the images you chose complement the running commentary on your 'week-end on the run'.

Yep, I'm dedicating issues of Claims Department and at least one issue of The Drink Tank a year to showcasing various Fan Artists, especially those that I don't think are appreciated well-enough around these parts.

I think you might be fandom's most prolific exponent of stream-of-consciousness writing, in that you habitually make it last for the length of the zine. Claire Brialey does that, too, with Anzapa mailing comments.



Both examples of the technique are impressive for different reasons – yours because you absorb the essence of experience from your notes and regurgitate it in words from your prodigious memory of events; and hers because of her propensity to read more than twenty zines in one sitting then present awed Anzapans with a coherent pastiche of them all.

Claire's pretty amazing, really. I miss ANZAPA, and when I heard that G and Zara have joined, I really feel like I should rejoin, but I just don't think I'm able to pull it off. The funniest thing is, I don't take notes, I rely on my memory. It's not that hard, I write most stuff up pretty fast, and as I'm an Historian, it's my job to remember things!

My fanzine *Interstellar Ramjet Scoop* began in 1969 as an Anzapazine typed on wax stencils and reproduced using a then state-of-the-art Roneo duplicator. Publication ceased when I gaffiated in 1980. IRS recommenced as an offset-printed zine when I rejoined Anzapa in 1996. I have used Ditmar cover graphics in all but one of the issues since then. 1997 saw Ditmar's erudite treatise on artistic dimensions of fractal geometry in story form serialised in six

consecutive issues of IRS. The entire 'Planet of the Eggs' saga, as it was called, was published in booklet form for distribution at Aussiecon Three (57th Worldcon in Melbourne, Australia, on September 2-6th, 1999). It includes some of the images you used in Claims Department #9. Your copy is in the post.

Oh fantastic! It sounds like something that I'd be totally into!

I'm surprised you didn't use Ditmar's best ever art piece. It's a Lyapounov fractal image out of his DJFractals program that adorned the cover of IRS February 1997 and was the first Ditmar graphic to appear in

a fanzine since the early 1970s. Jpeg of the graphic is attached.

That's a good one, and I'm not sure I came across it on my search of the DVD that Ditmar sent my way! There were so many and I even did a couple of different version, which is why it wasn't done a month and a half ago!

Ditmar might have been the only Australian fan working with computers in those days and, although his artwork wasn't computer-generated, he used a scraper-board technique to achieve much the same effect. In IRS June 2000 the cover graphic is a computer-generated version of one of Ditmar's old scraper-board images. I'll try to dig up a copy of both images and e-mail them to you. You might be interested in publishing them side by side. ***I'd love to see that stuff. I think I've only seen a couple of his older pieces so it would be wonderful to see the two of them!***

Thanks for your LoC on IRS June 2009 which, you will have noticed, shares star billing on eFanzines with eI 44 and Claims Department #9. It will be published in IRS August 2009. Ditmar appreciates your laudatory comments on the cover graphic.



Well, you've got one of my favourite zines going these days (eI being another one)

Regards from
Bill Wright

And, of course, there's Lloyd Penney, who I'm always glad to have a LoC from!

Dear Chris:

Hey, it's been a long time since I've located a Claims Department! Not sure how much I can say right now (computer's still not back from the shop), so here goes a few early morning words on issue 9.

OK, I'm ready. I've got a beverage in my

hand and have kicked my shoes off!

It's easy to say don't take it too seriously, but times like your Dad's death qualify, I think. I have been noticing for some time now that we all build familiar names and faces around ourselves, and as we get older, so do they, and they pass away. David Carradine died recently, for example. Yes, we watched his television work, but there's another familiar name or face gone. Forry passing on, Chester Cuthbert, more and more people in our sphere of popular culture, it's tough to deal with, and our consolation is everyone is going through the same thing. For as long as we're on this planet, enjoy the people around you and make new friends, especially younger than you are. I hate the idea of being old and alone, so being surrounded by friends would be my way to leave this earth.

Yeah, I kinda wanna go at a WorldCon, preferably in the middle of telling a joke to a group of young fen and not having gotten to the punchline. That'd be a lovely irony. Plus it would really give the Con-Comm something to work on!

Thrift stores are great fun; sure, there's lot of garbage, but the challenge is to find the gems in the gravel. In my area, there's a chain of thrift stores called Value Village, and I have found some great clothes there. There's also the local Salvation Army, Goodwill and St. Vincent de Paul stores, but Value Village is best, at least for what I'm looking for.

We have Value Villages around these parts, though we call them Savers these days. I go there looking for old computer stuff still, though I've also found a great many other fun things while on the hunt.

Head office for Cirque

de Soleil is in Montréal, and while there are performances of Cirque all over the world, I think there's still regular performances within Montréal. You should check first. It's Cirque's 25th anniversary (today!), so there may be something spectacular in Montréal around the time of Worldcon. Your friend Christian probably had to go to Montréal to get that job of his, or someone from the city came to talk to him. And, your favorite Laser Books's head office was in Toronto, by Harlequin, the same company that produced the endless romance novels.

He did go to Montreal to work on the show, as I recall from his MySpace page. The lucky bastard! I'd love to see Cirque. I've always into Circuses, though I tend to enjoy my circuses with the possibility of at least one person getting eaten by a Tiger.

You've got quite the selection of Ditmar artwork...Dick, do you have an online gallery of your work? That gallery might as well be in this issue; well done Chris.

There's nothing I love more than getting to run all this great stuff.

Quite a story with Denise and Anna. Few guys would have a great weekend story like that, I know I don't. I've been lucky in that I have made up for a lack of such stories with lots of close female friends.

I've got a ton of stories like that, though I must admit that I have to keep about as many under-wraps because of the level of my own embarrassment over being an idiot!

Well, I think I've done all I can here, but I've got The Drink Tank 214 to deal with too, so you'll get another letter from me soon. Take it easy, see you soon.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.
***And thank you Lloyd!
You're a mensch!***

