

NANBU DIVERS, NOW AND THEN

<1. What was the beginning?>

In 1898, there was a ship called the Nagoya-Maru, which was 2835 tons. The ship left Hakodate for Yokohama on the night of 25th, June. During the voyage, however, the ship went aground off of Hiranai, Hirono town because of thick fog. The ship sank to the bottom of the sea. But, 34 passengers and 76 sailors were all safe and came ashore from the ship.

The following year, in 1899, Kotaro Mimura, who was a diving expert, and three other divers came to Hirono Town from Boshu, Chiba. They came to salvage and scrap the Nagoya-Maru.

Then, Sadakichi Isozaki, who was a young local man, was hired to help them dive. His work was so good that he caught Mr. Mimura's eye. Mimura taught him how to dive with the helmet and suit. That was the beginning of "Nanbu-Diver".



※Taneichi Divers were called "Nanbu-Diver" because the area was the Hachinohe-Nanbu Clan's territory.

<2. Why did the name of Nanbu-Diver spread nationally?>

At the bottom of Lake Towada in Aomori, there were a lot of coins thrown by worshippers for over several hundreds years. Shinto Priests had an idea to salvage the money to revive the Towada Shire. But the salvage was so dangerous that they asked Sadakichi to do the job. It was believed that Lake Towada was a scared place based on a legend of a war of Hachiman Taro and Nansobou. So, other divers wouldn't try to do the salvage fearing a curse from a God.

However, Sadakichi cleansed his body every day for a week, and tried to salvage. It took Sadakichi 20 days to finish salvaging. He got as much as seven wagons full of money. With the money, he started diving as his job. This story made Nanbu-Diver famous across the country.

Let me live until the age of 50, and I will spread the fame of Nanbu-Diver!

Sadakichi told "Seiryugongen" about their success and he prayed for the future. In 1922, Sadakichi died at the age of 50, as he wished.

<3. Activity of Nanbu-Divers>

The Nanbu-Diver became well-known after the Russian-Japanese war, WW I and WWII. Nanbu-Divers dismantled and salvaged the sunken ships. Nanbu-Divers built up a solid reputation of salvaging in Japan.

Now, they use not only helmet and suit style but also scuba, hooker and various diving styles. They are taking part in a lot of works undersea across the country such as Honshu-Shikoku Bridge, Rainbow Bridge, Tokyo Bay Aqua Line, Kansai Airport, Harbor engineering, Salvage, and research.



<4. Nanbu-Diver's job>

Salvage: To salvage and investigate the sunken ships

Civil engineering in the harbor: Basic construction to make seawalls.

Construction of bridges : To make bridge piers.

Ocean study : Investigation of ocean creatures, resources, quality of the sea, terrain, geology, etc.

Fisheries products : Sea urchin, abalone and sea squirt, confirmation and maintenance of the cultivation equipment and shore net.

<5. Nanbu-Diver's equipment>

Helmet : It is made of copper (about 20kg). It consists of a head part and a neck part. The head part is connected with a hose to send air continually. The neck part is connected firmly, so divers don't get wet.

Diving suit : Dry suit for "helmet diving". It really doesn't flood, and can hold plenty of air.

Diving boots : The sole is made of iron (about 15~20kg). They are so heavy that divers can keep their balance in the water.

Front lead, Back lead: These are fitted at the neck part, front and back, to keep divers balance. Both weights are about 25~30kg in total. Without these, arms float and the body turns sideways when air gets inside.

Belt: A diver wears a belt around the waist, and it doesn't let air into the lower half of the body of the diving suit. If you accumulate air in the lower half of the body side, your legs come straight up in the air.

Equipment for air: Air compressor, air tank(control tank, reserve tank), air cleaner, flux meter, air pipe etc.