

## TITANIC DIVE 2005

### A journey to the Titanic, 3.8km deep under water (First Japanese to reach the Titanic Wreck)

#### Beginning

The Titanic was once called “the ship of dreams” and is now lying 3.8 kilometres below the surface of the Atlantic Ocean. I was eager to go and see the Titanic with my own eyes, and decided to take the adventure into the deep sea. The journey involved going in a submersible and travelling into the deep sea for 13 hours to get there and back. I heard about the Titanic Dive a few years ago from an organizer on board of the Russian Nuclear Ice Breaker “Yamal “ during my trip to the North Pole. I later contacted the organiser, carefully made preparations, worked hard and saved up a lot of money, then participated in the tour in July 2005.

On 6th of July 2005, I flew to St John’s in Newfoundland on the Eastern part of Canada from Narita Airport in Japan in about one whole day. Because of the time difference, I arrived there after midnight of the same day, and checked in to the hotel. In the afternoon that day, every one gathered and had a meeting with the organiser, and went of the Russian ship, *Academic Kildish*. That was the same ship where the movie *Titanic*, directed by James Cameron, was filmed. From St John port to where the Titanic had sunk, it was about a one and a half day sea trip (approx. 590 km). During that time, we were given the details of inside the ship, emergence drills, tips on how to take photos and videos using a camera, and lectures by the staff. Then we were explained about submersible *Mir* (means “peace” in Russian), and had some experiences inside the submersible. The *Mir* was 7.8 metres in length, and 3.6 metres wide, weighed 18.6 tonnes, and accommodate three passengers, including one pilot. Inside the submersible, the diameter was only 2.1 metres, but was a standard size for this type of submersible. There were



three windows in the submersible; one of 200 millimetres in the middle, and two of 120 millimetres to the right and left. I thought it'd be virtually impossible to take photos and videos from such small windows. There are two of the *Mir*, "Mir I" and "Mir II". Of course, these submersibles appeared in the film *Titanic*, and director James Cameron himself travelled in the submersible and which used in the filming of the movie.



On July 9, at around eight in the morning, we arrived at the site where the Titanic had sunk (above the ocean). It was announced the first trip of the submersible will take place the next day, on the 10th. It was decided that I will participate in the first submersible voyage. The pilot was Dr. Anatoly Sagalevich, the scientist who designed and invented the *Mir*. He also largely contributed to the filming of the *Titanic*, and appears at the

beginning of the film as submersible pilot. "I will guide you to the Titanic that lies at the bottom of this ocean, so please do not worry and have a great time", he said with confidence, and at the end added "our most important job is to bring you back to this ship safely" and dissipated everybody's fears straight away. I was also one of those such people. I had come to this point after several years of hard work, and had supposed to dispel all fears, but as the time to ride the submersible approached, my fears came back. In the past, when I had gone to places such as the North Pole and the South Pole, I was able to overcome my fears by preparing carefully and gaining relevant knowledge, but for some reason this did not work with the trip to the bottom of the sea. Perhaps because this was an experience that was completely different from what I've experienced so far, or it may have been because I was scared of leaving all of the submersible technology in the pilot's hands and going in this small submersible that had no escape. However, after talking with Anatoly a couple of times and talking with the other experts among the organisers who had gone in the submersible before, my fear turned into excitement and I couldn't wait to ride the submersible. Yet, there was also another reason for my fear. It was about the toilet. There was no toilet in the submersible so we have to use a urinal pot. Fortunately, my co-passenger was a female so I didn't need to worry too much, but the pilot is a male. But I didn't need to worry about this either. He is used to female passengers doing their business, and it was he himself who was to explain how to use it to us. However, he explains that many of the past passengers have been able to hold it for 13 hours. Each person's body is different and there is no single method to solve this problem, but after talking to several people, I came up with my own plan. First, I'll have a big lunch on the day before. Then I will exercise and let everything I've eaten out of my body during that day. Before

sleeping, drink a lot of water to store up sufficient fluid. That too, I'll excrete it all the next morning. Thus, I made sure my intestine and bladder were mostly empty, and I input this information into my brain that they're both empty. After that, I just needed to control it mentally. I wasn't sure if this plan would actually work out, but planning and preparing myself in such did ease my mind about the toilet, and my excitement just grew and grew. The day before, I was able to follow my plan accordingly. He also mentioned that when the sea is rough, the submersible sways a lot. To a person who wasn't particularly strong to motion, seasickness was a big worry. I was one of them. No medication was allowed to take. So I decided not to worry and put up with the sickness. Then my dive day has arrived.

### July 10th

I woke up before 6am. After drinking a little bit of water, I decided to do some light exercise on the rear deck. Of course, I skipped breakfast. When I arrived at the deck, my pilot, Anatoly, was doing some stretches there already. He will sit in the submersible for 13 hours, so it is necessary for him to move his body now. After this, I wore my underwear, fleece, tights, and socks and so on as instructed beforehand. On top of that, I wore a white and blue jumpsuit (men wore blue only), that looked like a space suit, and my excitement heightened. It was time for departure!

There was a meeting with the staff at 8am. It was decided *Mir I* will depart at 9:15am, and *Mir II* will depart at 10am. An American couple will ride in *Mir II*.

Oxygen masks, sandwiches, fruit, snacks, drinks, cold weather protection gear were prepared as well. We were instructed to minimise belongings as much as possible. There was also an introduction of the team members. Among them were technicians and all the staff who pulls the submersible up and down to the sea surface with a crane. Everyone was Russian. Team work is necessary for this procedure. This meeting only lasted for 10 minutes, but my fears had vanished and I was overfilled with excitement. I returned to my room one last time to go to the toilet. At 8:45am, I went to the place where I will embark on *Mir I*.



After greeting the staff, I had a short chat with my pilot, Anatoly. He said, "the sea is calm, and the submersible won't sway much. It'll be an easy ride. We're lucky." When I looked closely at the sea,



there were no tall waves. Before our departure, there was a photo shoot and an interview recorded on video. I was the first to dive, so most of our team members and fellow passengers cheered from the deck. From there I heard loud voices cheering “Masayo!” “Masayo!” I was to go in the first submersible, so I responded by gesturing “No.1”. When I climbed the ladder and arrived at the hatch, there was another cheer. I had climbed to a high place, so this time I was able to see the people’s faces clearly. I gave a big wave back. I took my shoes off, put them in a case, and crawled through the narrow 60cm hatch and sat in my seat. I was given my belonging, and put them behind my seat. Anatoly embarked the submersible last. The hatch was closed soon after. Then the submersible was pulled by the crane and lowered to the sea surface. For the 10-20minutes when

preparations to lower the submersible were made above, it swayed a little, but not so much that it made me feel sick. Then soon, they lowered the submersible. Here began my two-hour journey to the bottom of the sea, to the Titanic wreck.

#### 9:45 am

When looking out the window, I was clearly able to see the bubbles both sinking and rising. After going a few hundred meters down, the sunlight was gone, and it was pitch black outside the window. However, the submersible was stable and I couldn’t feel any swaying, so I didn’t feel like I was really submerging. It even felt as if there was just a black material covering the submersible windows, and the submersible itself was stopped. But according to Anatoly, the submersible was going down gradually, forming a swirl pattern. The thermometer inside the submersible indicated 18 degrees Celsius. I didn’t feel cold at all. Anatoly was good at controlling the submersible with his arms, while closely communicating with the people above the surface. At times he turned the light on outside the submersible and showed us what was outside. The level and positioning of the submersible can be checked by the radar and numbers displaying



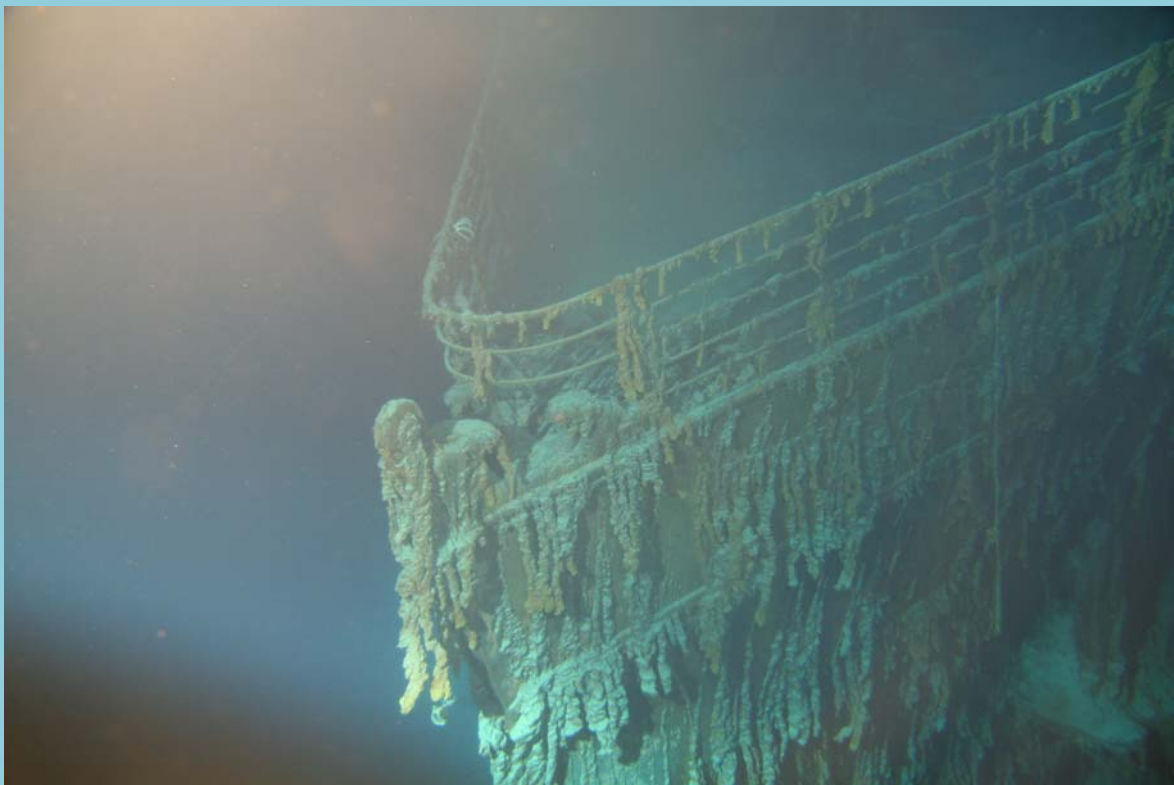
the front, sides and back. The last digit showing the meters was changing every few seconds. After checking the position of the bow of Titanic on the radar, Anatoly aimed the submersible there and submerged straight down. The navigation tour at the bottom of the ocean over the next five hours was planned as follows: firstly, take a look at the bow of the ship, then look at the top of the ship at the front and go around, look at the guest rooms, grand staircase, the bridge, the communication room, then go towards the stern of the ship, look at the engine room, and propellers. During this quest, the submersible will stop at or land on famous spots and stop for a picnic lunch. I wanted to avoid food or drinks, and take a lot of photos and videos, so I didn't really care about it. Either way, I didn't have that mental ease to enjoy a picnic lunch under the deep ocean.

After descending about 2000 meters, I started to feel a little cold. However, the temperature was still just above 18 degrees. Anatoly told me there were cold weather gears at the back of the seat, and for the time being decided to wear just the socks. It was a warm pair of big socks as if it could fit Santa's presents inside. But it was blue, not red. When I wore them, my whole body became warm, and I felt somewhat relieved. After a while, I gradually grew sleepy. "You can take a nap. I'll wake you up when we reach the bottom", said Anatoly. But I couldn't bring myself to sleep, leaving Anatoly alone to do all the work. He himself also nodded sleepily at times, so I was a little worried about the submersible. I was ready to grab the controller when he began to sleep.....so, I couldn't sleep. Of course, this would've been nothing but meaningless worry. I was taking photos and videos inside the submersible at times. I brought two digital cameras and one digital video camera inside the submersible with me; one for inside the submersible, and one for the Titanic. This was my own idea based on battery life and the number of photos they hold. I bought new digital cameras with a single-lens reflex camera. I took photos and video using the one prepared for the submersible. However, there weren't many things around to take a photo of, and after a while, I became bored. The submersible wasn't swaying at all, and it was stable, so to ease my nerves and tiredness, I decided to rest a little. After some time, when I opened my eyes, the distance reached 3000 meters. In about another 800 meters, we'll arrive at the Titanic. Anatoly adjusted the positioning of the submersible a little, so that we can land at the bow. After about 30 minutes, we landed at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. It was a soft landing.

#### At the bottom

After turning on the outside light of the submersible, the submersible landed 3800 meters deep at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. This was my very first time landing at the bottom of the sea. Then the fish in the deep sea greeted me. I was surprised to see there were fish even here. There were star fish and creatures like crabs nearby. After a while I saw the titanic that I had been waiting to see. It was the bow. With only the outside light of the submersible, I was only able to

see where the torch lit. The surrounding was pitch black. I was worried whether I could take photos or videos, but the light was bright enough, and it seemed that would not be a problem. I prepared my camera and video camera for the Titanic, and I set my digital camera so that a photo in Raw and Jpeg format will be taken at the same time. I had 2 GB of memory, but I took care to delete the bad photos immediately so that I'll be able to use as much memory as possible. My first aim was to take photos and videos of the bow. I'd spent over 30 minutes doing that. Then Mir II arrived as well. They lit their light beautifully around the bow. Perfect timing!

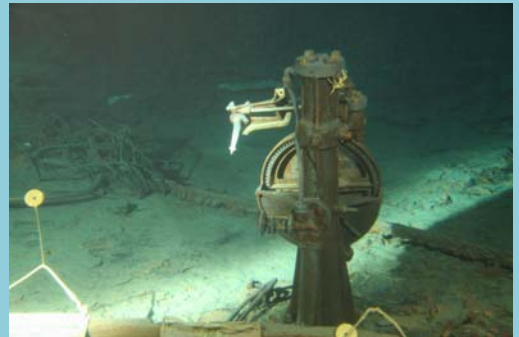


I took many photos making use of this opportunity. I also had to imprint this sight in my mind, and not only take photos. I kept examining the bow and its surroundings with my bare eyes. This sight I'd imprinted has come to be a sight I will never forget. I imagined Rose and Jack standing together just like the movie scene. However I had mixed feelings. The Titanic was a gorgeous ship as well as a dream ship. It has now turned into a pitiful sight. However, the Titanic which was still standing up straight on the seabed honourably seemed to still have its majesty and beauty. I see the Titanic as ship of beauty, rather than a tragic ship that took away 1500 peoples' lives or a ghost ship that has now become an ugly look. The Titanic further heightened my passion for adventure.



Then we went above the Titanic. From the window I was able to see huge chains and winches (lifting device). Then I saw the mast. "Iceberg!" "Iceberg!" Anatoly shouted. Yes, this was the exact spot where the iceberg was sighted, and the alarm bell echoed. The mast is still lying on its side.

We travelled left from there, and saw the steering wheel. The steering wheel was intact and was clearly seen from the view. Anatoly stabilised the submersible and let us take a photo from close by. It was so clear, that I could almost reach my hand out and touch it. I was able to take many beautiful photos and videos of the steering wheel. This is exactly where a crew turned the wheel to the full to desperately avoid the iceberg.



After that we went to the guest room. The window and window frames were still pretty. I also saw the room of Morley Brown, an American tycoon who joined the rich people. After a while I could see the expansion joint hugely split. I felt as if I had a glimpse of the tremendous fear when the ship collapsed. Just at that time Anatoly seemed to be having terrible problems with the control. The submersible seemed to be caught in something. Perhaps we couldn't

escape? This couldn't be true! The submersible remained still for a while. Anatoly said to us, "Please chat about something". Anatoly who said it was his first time to have two female passengers, seemed to be tired at times with our excitement and chatting, but this time it was different. "He must be joking!" I hoped for the better, but I had come to the point that I had a nervous breakdown, and finally said "I've seen enough of the Titanic. Maybe we can go back to the surface now." I am not certain how much time passed by, but eventually the submersible started to move again. "Now we're alright", said Anatoly confidently. I do not know if the incident was real. But it does not matter anymore, and I keep it as a memorable story. We finally settled again and started our trip again. After looking at the promenade deck for first class passengers, we went to the grand staircase. The beautiful scenery in the movie Titanic was not to be seen anywhere. It

was unrecognizable unless you were told that it was the grand staircase. We passed above the ship and went to Captain Smith's cabin. The room had kept its shape, yet it was severely worn. Few hours flew by. Anatoly suggested we should have our picnic lunch now, but both of us did not care about food. I thought it was a better idea not to put anything in my stomach so that I won't need to go to the toilet and won't get sick when the submersible sways after reaching the sea surface.



Without anyone eating, we went back to the bow again, and viewed it from the side, the top, diagonally, and from above. My feeling towards the Titanic still didn't change, and I was just struck at its majesty and beauty.

Soon we saw Mir II coming from the opposite direction and it was coming closer and closer. We were just about to bump each other but I thought the pilots would avoid the collision, but didn't. Boon! We have collided. I thought we would die of the deep sea accident because the impact was strong, but my pilot said this would happen from time to time, so not a big deal! For me it was a threatening moment, but it was actually an exciting adventurous moment.

### 3 pm

After that we went to the back of the ship and went to the stern of the ship to see the engine room and see the propeller. It'll take 30 minutes to get there. Anatoly suggested we take a good rest, and we nodded in consent. That moment, something cold dripped on me. I was horrified that instant. Fear surrounded me. There was water running on the window glasses too. I was scared to look above at the hatch, but there seemed to be nothing wrong. "Yes, water drops", said the co-passenger. "It's just water drops" also said Anatoly, and he wiped the water on the windows and inside the submersible with a towel. Then I remembered, I was told there would be water drops in the submersible after some time. It was something we had been told about before, so my fears vanished instantly. But the water drop on my forehead was not something nice to experience. The room temperature was now 17 degrees Celsius. I didn't feel that cold. Feeling relieved, I felt the need to go to the toilet, as if I'd just remembered. But it wasn't urgent. This was because my bladder was virtually empty. But just in case I do want to go to the toilet, I told Anatoly and the co-passenger I might go to the toilet soon. In the meantime, we arrived at the back of the ship. This was where the Titanic had split in to two, and unlike the bow, the stern had sunk upside down.



First, we saw the engine room. The engine was as big as eight stories high. The hugeness of it was immeasurable. We were able to see a large part of the engine, which still remained in its original form, called the blow off valve. I was also able to see a little bit of the sign that said "Titanic". Seeing the engine that has been severely damaged, I felt as if I could sense the great terror at the time of the crash. According to Anatoly, the Titanic only took a few minutes to get the bottom of the sea. That is how fast the ship reached the bottom of the ocean. The front of the ship sank vertically, and now more than half of it is above the seabed. The back of the ship sank at a right angle, and most of it is buried under the sand, but the part that is still above the ground is standing vertically.



After looking at the engine room for a while, we went to see the propeller. Only two out of three propellers were seen, but the submersible could only approach one of them. At first, I couldn't tell which one was the propeller as it was so huge. But eventually, I was able to see a big propeller in the full view with my own eyes. Anatoly explained this was inside the Titanic. That is because the stern of the ship is now above the submersible. Finally we had arrived to the inside of the Titanic. This is the last place of the Titanic tour. It was 5:30pm. There was still 30 minutes until we had to start going back up. Anatoly suggested we have a stroll around the Titanic. He told us there was a place where some belongings of the passengers still remained. He parked the submersible on the sand with its legs, and searched the seabed as if it was crawling. Bottles, plates, cups, most of them had been scattered without braking. Among the cups and plates, there were items that were still in perfect condition and can be used now, immediately. We spent 30 minutes searching for an item, then taking photos and videos, and so on. Then the time to start heading back up came.

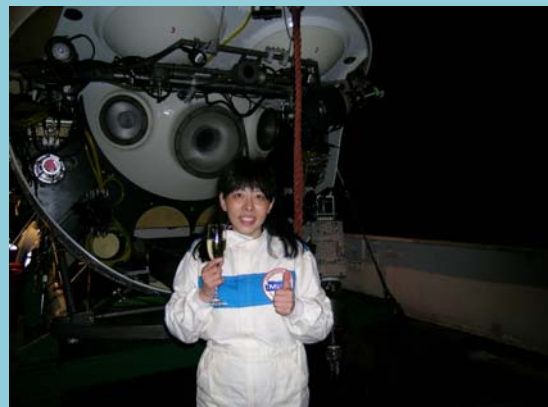


6:00 pm

I continued to be overwhelmed by the sceneries that came before me, which I had not seen on this earth before. The six hours had gone by quickly. "I want to stay here longer", I joked, to which Anatoly replied "should we stay here for the night?" Apparently, when doing formal research, he does stay at the bottom of the ocean overnight. "Not this time, no thank you", I replied, and could not wait going back to the surface. I felt that time passed very slowly and one hour was felt like one full day. I am not sure even now whether these five hours was short or long, but I felt like it was a space trip where I travelled to a different time and space. It takes one and a half hours to return back to the surface, the quickest. From about 2000 meters below the water, the room temperature rose to 18 degrees Celsius again, but this change in temperature somewhat felt colder. I decided to wear the remaining cold weather gear and make myself warm. Then at about 7:30 pm we arrived back at the surface. The sun was still shining on the water, and it was just before sunset. However, this time the submersible swayed, and there was the possibility I'll get sick. I prepared a bag in my hand. The crane didn't lift the submersible from the water for some time. What on earth had happened? Was the preparation just taking time? After about 20 minutes we were finally lifted above the surface. There was a beautiful sunset, and I could see the faces of the staff. I have come back. I was relieved. Anatoly safely fulfilled his promise to bring us back to the ship.

8:30 pm

The submersible safely arrived back at the sea surface. The hatch opened. There was no change in air pressure, so my ears did not go funny, and not to mention, I did not get sick at all either. I was able to see the faces of the staff from above the hatch. Then they helped us out of the submersible. When we arrived at the top of the hatch, the staff and fellow passengers cheered me loudly. "No.1 Japanese!" many of them congratulated. I shouted back 'I safely came back. It was the most wonderful time I ever had in my life.' I then put my shoes on and went down the ladder and arrived back on the ship. The tour leader gave me a bottle of champagne. With the champagne in one hand, say cheese! I took a memorial photo of landing at the place where the Titanic sank. After that, from a cameraman inside the ship, and a German cameraman, I received an interview. "After reaching the North Pole, and the South Pole, I became



the first Japanese to reach the Titanic wreck lying at the bottom of the ocean. This is an extremely happy moment in my life.” I was able to reply in the interview. My excitement did not ease for some time. However the time was up. The Russian woman who was to wash my jumpsuit was waiting for me to take it off. “Whoops!” I wanted to relax a little more, but I had to take them off quickly. More importantly, I had to go to the toilet. Ultimately, I’d completely forgotten about going to the toilet until then. It was about 16 hours since I last went. “This also is a self record”, I thought proudly to myself. That night, I had dinner, had a shower, and thought of going to bed early, but my excitement from the Titanic came back, and I ended up sorting my photos until late evening, thinking over my trip to the Titanic again and again. I also strolled around this ship where the Titanic was filmed, and reflected back on scenes from the movie as well.

## Epilogue

All of the Titanic events had finished and the day for us to go back to St. John's had come. I left on July 15, in the afternoon. I stayed at the hotel one day early. Then the next day, an unexpected incident occurred. This was a perfect ending to my trip to the Titanic. I was able to meet James Cameron, the director of the film Titanic. Not only did I meet him, but I was able to take a photo together. He praised me saying, "congratulations of being the first Japanese to land at the Titanic", and also gave me a hug. I have captured that on video as well. Asking in English, "Are you really the director, James Cameron?" he replied, "Honto (True)" in Japanese. He was tall, handsome and born in Canada. I instantly became a fan. I succeeded in a short interview with him after, which lasted a couple of minutes. Is this a dream, a ghost or real? Of course it was real. He had come to broadcast on TV live footage of the Titanic, for the first time in the world ever. He said he'll go in the submersible the following day. I met his brother and the filming staff. It was the most precious time in my life, and that had let me give a great ending to my travelogue. It became an experience I'll never forget.



Lastly, this is a poem I wrote myself on the Titanic:

*Titanic has known to be the ship of dream, but it is no longer the ship of dream. It is the ship of adventure. It enables us to explore the deep ocean. Titanic is as beautiful as ever before and its beauty will never fade away, as long as our adventure continues. Masayo Goto*