

**ACTIVITY:** Diving for shells  
**CASE:** [GSAF 1995.04.09.a](#)  
**DATE:** Sunday April 9, 1995  
**LOCATION:** The incident took place off the Atsumi Peninsula, Aichi Prefecture, Japan.  
33°35.6'N, 137°01.6'E



**NAME:** Shintaro Hara  
**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 47-year-old male, a professional diver. He was wearing SCUBA, a black wetsuit and carried a lamp and a nozzle of a water-jet hose for digging the shell from the sand bottom.

### BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** The sky was cloudy.  
**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, April 8, 1995  
**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea was calm and the surface water temperature was about 13°C. At the nearest oceanographic observation station, located about 10 km from the accident site, recorded air temperature of 12.2°C, water temperature and salinity 11.4°C and 32.3% at the surface, and 11.8°C and 32.5% at the bottom (14 m).  
**ENVIRONMENT:** The accident took place on a flat sandy bottom  
**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** One kilometre  
**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:** 25 metres.  
**TIME:** 10h15



*Panopea japonica*

**NARRATIVE:** There were about 80 fishing boats nearby. Shintaro Hara was diving for bivalves, *Panopea japonica*. His wife, Etsuko Hara, was tendering on the boat above, supporting his underwater work. According to interviews, Dr. Kazuhrio Nakaya states: “at first the position of bubbles from the diver began to move around unusually on one side of the tendering boat, and then the bloody water came up with the bubbles. The shark soon came up to the surface with the victim in the jaws, shook its head violently, severing the body on the right side, and disappeared. The body was left afloat and it was pulled aboard the boat by colleagues. The air tank and weight belt were not on the victim’s body. Mr. Hara was transported immediately to the hospital but apparently he had been killed instantly.”

**INJURY:** Fatal. An autopsy was performed by Mr. Seiji Itoh, a coroner of Gamagouri Maritime Safety Office, and he reported that the right half of the pectoral region, including the right arm, was severed and missing from the shoulder to the waist.

**DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT:** Dr. Nakaya examined the results of the autopsy and “noted the right side of the trunk and right arm of the inner and outer jackets of the wet suit were missing below the base of the neck and the upper right corner of the pants were also cut away. Many tooth marks were found along the cut-margin of the suit. Fine notches were

discovered along the cut margin of the suit, and fine streaks were left on the sectioned surfaces. The tooth marks were confined on the right half of the jacket and pants, and no tooth mark or scratch was found on the other parts of the suits. Various measurements were taken on the remaining part of the wetsuits and pants. Maximum diameter of the missing part of the wetsuit was 46 cm from neck to the lateral side of the abdomen. The width of the jaws estimated by the distribution of tooth marks was roughly 40 cm. The distances between neighboring tooth marks ranged from 18.5 mm to 62 mm, mostly between 35 mm and 50 mm.”

The air tank and weight belt were recovered from the nearby seabed on May 4, 1995, and sent to Dr. Nakaya by Hara’s wife. “The right side of the hard plastic harness had eight narrow, sharp and long cuts, 1.6 mm wide, 7 to 34 mm long and about 10 mm deep. Fine clear streaks were observed on the cut surfaces, and the width of one streak averaged 0.8 mm. The right shoulder belt was cut off at the shoulder and waist, and the middle part of the belt was missing. The waist belt received a deep cut on the left side of the buckle, and was cut off at the right side of the harness. Other parts of the harness and the left shoulder belt were undamaged. The two hoses on the regulator leading to the mouthpiece and the depth gauge were cut off at about 18 cm from the regulator, and had received some additional scratches. The air hose was cut obliquely, with many parallel fine streaks on the surface.”

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Dr. Nakaya’s report continues: “Distribution of the tooth marks on the wetsuit appeared to show the arched arrangement of the teeth on the jaws. The width of the jaw was estimated at 40cm, suggesting a large shark. The width of jaws, estimated at 40 cm, equates to a 5.2 m white shark caught in Hokkaido which had a mouth width of this size. Fine notches and streaks were found on the surface of cuts on the wetsuit, harness and breathing tube, and these indicate the shark had serrated teeth. It was inferred that the accident involved a white shark.”

“About 15 to 20 minutes after the attack the shark reappeared at the same place and hovered under the stern of Mr. Sadao Hara’s fishing boat for about half a minute. He described it as a huge dark-colored shark about six metres total length, in comparison with his boat size. After the attack, fishermen attempted to catch the shark but no large shark was caught in the nearby water.”

**REPORTED BY:** Kazuhiro Nakaya, Laboratory of Marine Zoology, Faculty of Fisheries, Hokkaido University, Japan *in* Nakaya, Kazuhiro (1996). A Fatal Attack in Aichi Prefecture, Japan, with Other Confirmed Attack Case in Japanese Waters. *Fish. Sci.* 62(5):830- 831. (see GSAF Members’ Library for a copy of this paper)