

## “To Sea” or “To Land”

– SOME FISHERMEN MADE A SPLIT SECOND LIFE OR DEATH  
DECISION – OFUNATO

March 17, 2011, 4:19 am

The fishing port of Yoshihama Bay, Ofunato City, Iwate Prefecture was destroyed by the tsunami. Fishing nets and buoys are flung everywhere. Photo credit: Endo, 3.15.11

This fishing port in the northern section of Ofunato City, known for its farm-raised awabi (abalone) and wakame (seaweed) took a decimating blow from the tsunami. Almost every facility of the 300 member Yoshihama Fishing Cooperative was destroyed. But the majority of the fisherman at work that day in Yoshihama Bay escaped the worst. What saved them was a split second decision.

On March 11th at 2:46 pm, the tsunami swallowed up ten fishing boats at work thinning out wakame seaweed [beds].“

It was different from the usual earthquakes,” said Hisashi Kashiwazaki, 59. A loud rattling sound rose from the bottom of the ship. From the trees on the cape surrounding the bay he could see cedar pollen leap into the air like sparks in a forest fire.

With him on the boat were his wife Hisami, 54, and his second son Koji (26). Kashiwazaki-san stopped what he was doing and hurried out to sea, anchoring at a depth of about 70 (230 ft). The tsunami rushed in about 15 minutes later. “All that happened [to us] was that the whole boat rose with the water level. We didn’t shake at all.”

The three ton fishing vessel carrying Takahito Michishita, 47 and his father Yoshio (76) was greatly shaken by the earthquake. What flashed through Takahito’s mind at that instant was some wisdom he’d heard from long ago: “tsunamis aren’t as high in deep water.”

His father Yoshio had also heard from older fishermen that they “had been saved during the Sanriku Great Tsunami of 1933 by going out to sea.”

They ran their engine full throttle and headed for a location several kilometers out to sea. They had no sense of the boat passing over the tidal wave. But looking back on it, they could see the rising wave in the port and white foam of the wave breaking.

Many boats in harbor at the time of the tsunami in Chile last year were also able to ride through by heading out to sea.

The Fisheries Agency published a guideline after the Fukuoka western offshore earthquake of 2005 recommending that in cases where escape to a marine area is faster than going to land, “evacuation should be to an area with a depth of 50 meters or above, and to an even greater depth when a major tsunami warning is issued.”

## 「沖へ」「陸へ」

漁師の生死分けた一瞬の判断 — 大船渡

2011年3月17日4時19分

津波で破壊された岩手県大船渡市・吉浜湾の漁港。漁網やブイが散乱していた=15日、遠藤写す東日本大震災の大津波で、アワビやワカメの養殖で知られる岩手県大船渡市北部の漁港も壊滅的な打撃を受けた。約300人が加盟する吉浜漁協も施設のほとんどが破壊された。だが、吉浜湾内で操業中だった漁師の大半は難を逃れた。命を守ったのは、一瞬の判断だった。11日午後2時46分、ワカメの間引きをしていた漁船約10隻を、地震が襲った。「いつもの地震と違った」と柏崎寿さん(59)。船底からガタガタと大きな音がした。湾を囲む岬の森から、スギ花粉が山火事の火の粉のように舞い上がるのが見えた。船上には、妻の久美さん(54)、次男の紘治さん(26)もいた。柏崎さんは作業を中断し、沖へ急いだ。水深約70メートル地点で停泊。津波が押し寄せたのは約15分後だった。「水面の上昇に合わせて船全体が浮き上がっただけ。全く揺れなかった」道下孝人さん(47)と父の芳男さん(76)が乗っていた3トンの漁船も地震で大きく揺れた。孝人さんの頭をよぎったのは、昔から聞かされていた知恵だ。「水深の深い沖なら津波は高くない」芳男さんも、先輩漁師から「昭和8(1933)年の三陸大津波で、沖に出て助かった」と聞いたことがあった。エンジンを全開にして数キロ先の沖をめざした。船が津波を越えていった感覚はなかった。だが、振り返ると、漁港の方で波が盛り上がり、白波が立つのが見えた。昨年の中里地震で津波が届いた際も、湾内の多くの船が沖に出て乗り切った。水産庁は、05年の福岡県西方沖地震を受け、ガイドラインを策定。漁船などが陸上よりも避難海域に逃げる方が早い場合は「水深50メートル以深の海域へ避難し、大津波警報が出された場合は、更に水深の深い海域へ避難する」としている。