

## While Looking Forward to the Graduation Ceremony... Minamisanriku Shizugawa Junior High School



▲ For the time being, evacuees had food thanks to rice that people had brought with them when evacuating and a load of seafood from a freezer truck that had evacuated to high ground. A stove was created using the metal gratings from gutters, cooking utensils were borrowed from the school, and a meal was cooked for the evacuees.

Photo courtesy of Suto Seiichi

On the morning of March 12, 2011, 300 onigiri rice balls were delivered to Shizugawa Junior High School, to which about 600 people had evacuated. The onigiri had been made by people living in Iriya, an area that lies inland from the coast. The evacuees divided the onigiri rice balls in half and ate them.

A transportation company truck had evacuated to the high ground at Bayside Arena. A fishery company's president and other staff reached out to the driver and asked him to unload his frozen cargo, which they decided to share with evacuees. Seafood, such as coho salmon, pacific saury, and abalone, was transported to Shizugawa Junior High School, where the students helped carry the items. Sandpit stoves were built using the metal gratings from gutters, and the frozen fish was grilled to make a meal for the evacuees. People who had evacuated to the school with rice loaded in their cars offered rice, which was cooked into a rice porridge. Branches that evacuees had collected in the hills behind the school were used for fuel.

Some people had fled their homes with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. They no longer had a home to return to. For them, this was the beginning of communal living with 600 people.

The teachers dug a hole in the ground beside the gymnasium. They would then lay a board over the hole and put up walls of blue sheeting to create a makeshift toilet. Their decisiveness and self-sacrificing cooperation helped the townsfolk immensely.

March 12 was the day that the school's graduation ceremony had been scheduled to be held.