Abraham (Abe) Sabbatini was born on 7 September 1913 in the small town of Glen Lyon, Pennsylvania, the son of Italian immigrant parents. Less than a year old, his parents went back to Italy, and here Abe lived until 1929, when he was sixteen years old. Returning then to the United States, he stayed briefly in Pennsylvania before moving to the San Francisco area, where he worked many years in the plumbing trade. In 1941 Abe was drafted into the US Army; he was assigned to the Air Corps, to the 440th Ordinance Company. In late 1941 this unit was posted to the Philippines, to an Air Corps base near Manila.

When Japanese forces attacked the Philippines in December 1941, Abe’s unit was moved south, to Mindanao. With other Americans, he became a POW in May 1942, when US forces surrendered. Abe remained at Malaybalay, on Mindanao, until about October 1942, then was transported with other American POWs to the Davao Penal Colony, also on Mindanao. Skilled in wood- and leatherworking, as a POW Abe worked in a small machine shop.

In mid-1944 Abe was in a group of POWs placed on a hell ship for transport to Japan; the journey took more than two months, ending at the Japanese port of Moji, on the southern island of Kyushu. POWs were transported by train to Yokkaichi, by Nagoya, where Abe worked for several months in a plant that produced sulfuric acid. In June 1945, following an earthquake, Abe was in a group of about 150 POWs moved to Camp #7 at Toyama; here the work was in a factory, a scrap iron smelter. US B-29s firebombed Toyama on 2 August 1945, destroying over ninety percent of the city, but the POW compound was spared destruction. Several weeks later the war ended, and on September 5, Abe and the POWs at this facility were evacuated by American forces. Abe spent some days in the Philippines before boarding a ship for the United States. He was at several military hospitals before his discharge in February 1946.

Again a civilian, Abe returned to the San Francisco area, and worked as a plumber, retiring in 1974. He married in December 1945 (wife Emma), and helped to raise two boys. Abe Sabbatini was interviewed in January 2004 at his home in San Mateo, California.
Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is 24 January 2004, and this is an interview of the POW Oral History Project, based at Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota. My name is Thomas Saylor, and today I am speaking with Mr. Abraham Sabbatini, by telephone to his home in San Mateo, California. First, Mr. Sabbatini, thanks very much for taking time to speak with me today.

A: You’re welcome.

T: Let’s start in late 1941. I know from talking to you prior to starting the recording, that you were sent to the Philippines sometime in 1941. When were you sent to the Philippines?

A: We were sent to the PI, I think it was in October. (pauses three seconds) Yes, in October 1941.

T: Where were you stationed in the Philippines?

A: In the Philippines we landed at March Field.

T: Is March Field, an Air Corps field, a large field?


T: What kind of work were you doing at March Field?

A: We used to get the bombs, put them on the truck. Run them from the dump, set the fuses, try to put them on the plane. And that’s about what we done.

From March Field, December the, the (pauses three seconds) fourth, no December 2, they moved our company to Mindanao. They took the 440th Ordinance, 701st Ordinance, and the 200th Coast Artillery away from March Field, and they sent us down to Mindanao. In Mindanao we arrived in Cagayan de Oro, a seaport [on the north side of the island]. From there we traveled about twenty, maybe thirty miles inland, and we occupied an airfield that was owned by the Del Monte pineapple plantation. They had a big plantation on Mindanao, of pineapple. That’s where I met Bob Dowding [another POW interviewee]. Bob was with the 5th Air Force.
T: The Japanese attacked the Philippines on December 8, 1941. What was your reaction to now being involved in the war?

A: When the Japanese attacked, we heard about it through the radio. And then our company commander called us, you know. We got bombed, the Del Monte air base got bombed on December 19, I think.

T: That bombing, was that the first time you were involved in an actual shooting situation?

A: That’s right.

T: Can you talk about what that experience was like for you?

A: When the Japanese came over and bombed our field, I think we had three or four B-24 or B-17. But we had only one .50 caliber machine gun and two .30 caliber machine guns. So we couldn’t defend ourselves. It was pretty scary, because we soldiers didn’t have nothing. We went to defend the Philippines with the shoes on our feet, that’s all! (laughs) It was a lousy situation because, I tell you, we unloaded a lot a bombs. The bombs came in by the boatload, and we unloaded a lot of bombs.

The first couple weeks the planes used to come in from Australia. They used to bomb on the way up, and then stop at Del Monte airfield to refuel, and we loaded them with bombs. Then on the way back, they used to bomb. Then we ran out of fuel, so they couldn’t stop there anymore. So when we surrendered, we had an order not to destroy anything, to leave every plane that we had, every truck and everything else. But we didn’t want to leave all the bombs, so what we done, now this took place in Valencia, they had an airbase in Valencia. They called it Valencia Air Base, Valencia City. So what we done, we took three 500 pound bombs, and we put all the fuses, I don’t know how many, hundreds of fuses, right on top and then we blow them up.

T: And the bombs without the fuses are useless?

A: That’s right. But the Japanese, three or four days later, they came in there and took all the bombs. But they didn’t have the fuses.

(1, A, 52)

T: Let’s move ahead to another theme, your capture by the Japanese. Do you remember what day it was that you were actually captured by the Japanese?

A: Oh yes, yes. We were captured May 10, 1942.

T: What do you remember about the actual surrender itself?
A: The actual surrender, what we had to do, we had to throw away all the arms that we had: side arms, machine guns, and everything else. We walked inside the camp at Malaybalay. It’s on Mindanao.

T: How would describe how you were feeling at that time?

A: Well, we weren’t too happy, because, well, we couldn’t even defend ourselves. In fact, I want to tell you the truth, for about two months [prior to the surrender] the 440th Ordinance, 701st Ordinance, and the 200th Coast Artillery, they couldn’t do nothing, so they decided to put us on the front line. Now they didn’t even have a rifle or machine gun to give us.

T: So what could you do?

A: *(laughs)* We couldn’t do nothing. You had to sit, all day long, that’s all.

T: What kind of physical condition were you in at the time of the surrender, Mr. Sabbatini?

A: At the time of the surrender we were pretty good. The food was—now we surrendered in May—around February or March the food was very little. We didn’t have any, you know? But at that time we used to buy eggs or chickens from the Filipinos. In fact, once, three of us, myself and two other guys, they’re both dead now, we buy two goats for ten pesos.

T: Two goats?

A: Two goats. Little ones, little baby ones. For ten pesos. We killed one, and we cooked it, but when the company commander heard about it he said, “You take the other goat up to mess hall, so everyone can eat it.” So we said, “Nothing doing, sir,” and we kept the goat for about another fifteen or twenty days, and then we sold it to a Filipino for a sack of peanuts *(laughs)*.

T: When you first encountered the Japanese face to face, what kind of an impression did they make on you?

A: When we first met the Japanese, they weren’t too bad, you know. At Malaybalay it was a big, big camp, a Filipino camp, and we took a section of it. We were treated pretty good. I don’t know if it’s true or not, but they told us that one of the Japanese commanders, and the American commander, they met at West Point. While the Japanese was going to school there.

T: So they knew each other then?
A: We stayed there three months, and they used to give us a chance to... Every week they used to send out a detail to kill a steer, or some kind of meat, you know, and bring it over. So we had meat about once a week there.

T: Now you said you were at Malaybalay for about three months after May 1942?

A: For about three months, yes.

T: What kind of conditions did you prisoners have there, like the barracks or the sleeping quarters, for example?

A: Oh, it was wood barracks, no windows, nothing open. At night you had a mosquito net. Sometimes you needed that, because in the Philippines there are a lot of mosquitoes.

T: There at Malaybalay did you have work details that you were on?

(1, A, 98)

A: I started in Albuquerque [New Mexico, before I went to the Philippines]. I was working on the carpenter shop in my time off. And then when I got to Malaybalay, the Japanese, they gave us a chance to start the generator, about eight or nine o’clock at night, for three hours. And we used to do, we used to do a lot of work in the carpenter shop. Maintenance, you know?

T: This was work that you had to do, or that you were able to do in addition to other work? I’m not clear on this.

A: Work that I was able to do.

T: Were you able to make useful things?

A: Yes. For example, we used to fix the benches, fix the tables in the kitchen, and so on and so forth. I want to tell you, in Malaybalay we had a general by the name of King, General King, and he was an older man, a career man, and he was pretty heavy. When he came to Malaybalay, the army cot that we had was too small for him. So we made him a bed, to sleep on.

T: This was work in the evening. What kind of work did the Japanese have you doing during the day at Malaybalay?

A: Well, there was no work to do during the day at Malaybalay.

T: So how did people spend the days at Malaybalay?
A: Well, we had to do calisthenics, morning and evening. I remember a few guys, for a couple days they didn’t shave. So our company commander, he called them in and he said, “Why don’t you shave?” They said, “We don’t have any hot water.” He said, “You report to me tomorrow shaved. If you don’t have any hot water, you get the tweezers and pull your hair out with a tweezers. I want to see you shaved.”

T: It sounds like he was trying to maintain a sense of army life.

A: Yes.

T: Let me ask about the food at Malaybalay.

A: The food at Malaybalay was pretty good. At Malaybalay we had rice with no worms! (laughs)

T: I take it you had rice with worms later, then, somewhere else? (laughs)

A: Oh my god, yes. When we moved from there, when we went to Dapecol [Davao Penal Colony], the Japanese, I think they raided all the rice barracks in French Indochina and all over, and we had more worms than rice.

T: Anything to supplement the rice, or was it just rice that you had?

A: Like I said, at Malaybalay we had meat every now and then. And they gave us some greens to mix together.

T: The Japanese that you saw, guards for example, what kind of people were they?

A: The Japanese guards, some of them were guards from Korea.

T: Koreans?

A: No, not from Korea, (Italian phrase, unclear) from Formosa. In Malaybalay, we were treated pretty good, humane in other words.

T: The Formosans were better than the Japanese?

A: The Formosans were better than the Japanese.

T: How long did you stay at Malaybalay?

A: Three months. And then we were moved to the Davao Penal Colony. And Davao was a very different place. Davao used to be a Filipino jail, a prison camp.

T: So it already existed, then, before you got there.
A: The Japanese removed all the Filipino prisoners, and put us there.

T: What do you remember about the quarters there at Davao?

(1, A, 152)

A: In Davao the barracks were about the same as there in Malaybalay. In Davao they had a big carpenter shop, too. They had a little train, with small track, that they used to take us to the rice field, and the avocado field. Big plantation of avocado fields, and they used to grow pineapple, banana, coconut, all over.

T: What kind of work were you doing in the fields?

A: Now I didn't work in the fields. But I'll tell you the kind of work they did in the fields. In the rice fields they used to plant rice. They used to work the field with the plow, and with the caribou. They also planted sweet potatoes, and some corn. But when the crop came, the Japanese took all the crop, and they gave us nothing. In fact, they used to give us the top of the potato, to make soup. Believe me, that was one of the worst, bitter, and black soup that I ever had.

T: So the prisoners raised the food, but didn't get to eat it.


T: You mentioned that you weren't doing that work you described. What were you doing?

A: I told you I was working the carpenter shop in Malaybalay, and in Albuquerque.

T: Right.

A: Now when the Japanese asked us, when we went in and the Japanese interviewed us, “What kind of work do you do?” Our company commander told us, “Tell them you don’t have no special training, because otherwise they are going to send you away.” So the work that I was doing in Dapecol, I was... I am going to start from the beginning. When we got to Dapecol, a lot of us, we didn’t have no shoes. We used to walk and work barefooted. So I suggested to the company commander if I could make some sandals out of some wood. I told him, I remember back in Italy, during the summer when I used to go work on the farm, some of us used to have wood sandals with a canvas strap on top. So that’s what I done—I spent all my time in Dapecol on the carpenter shop to make wood sandals for the POWs.

T: So at Davao you were a carpenter, a shoemaker really.

A: Yes (laughs). I did, and I was lucky.
T: From your perspective, was this better work that being out in the fields?

A: Oh yes, yes *(emphatically)*. In the field you used to stay out in the sun, and in the Philippines the sun is pretty hot. And we didn’t have no cap, nothing to wear, nothing. In the carpenter shop, not to brag, but I’ll tell you the truth—I was the only enlisted man that was working beside the officers. All the others was officers but me. I’ll tell you what, the officers, some of them was fifty, fifty-five years old, old career army guys. They wouldn’t send them in the field, but what they did, they sent them in the carpenter shop. They give them a bamboo pole. They had to strip the pole, to make like a little (***) and then to make a rug, a mat, out of bamboo.

T: You had good duty, then, at Dapecol.

A: I had one of the best duties there at Dapecol.

T: The Japanese were okay with you making shoes for people? *(1, A, 210)*

A: Oh yes, yes.

T: What kind of wood did you make these shoes out of?

A: *(laughs)* Any wood they had. Any wood the Japanese would give me. Some wood was maybe three quarters of an inch, you know. When the POWs wanted a pair of shoes, I said, “Put your foot on there.” I used to mark the foot, put the name on [the wood], and I used to make it. They would come back the next day and get them. For the strap: Army canvas, double it over, and put small nails in both sides.

One day an American came over with a piece of wood, balsa wood. It’s a light wood. He told me to make him a pair of shoes. So I told him, “I’ll make you a pair of shoes with that, but the shoes won’t last. You work in the rice fields a few days, and the shoes will last you only a few days.” “No,” he says, “You make them from this.” So I made it, and then I put a strap all around. What he done, this poor guy—he didn’t tell me, but I found out later—he lifted the strap up, and he put a hole in and he hollowed underneath. The wood was about an inch and a half thick. He hollowed, and then every day he used to fill that hole with rice. He came home, and then I guess he cooked the rice in the barracks, or maybe he ate it raw. We had to stop and see to Japanese guard for the inspection before we came into the camp. They told him left face, or right face, and when he did the strap broke, and the rice fell on the ground. Poor guy, they beat him so much, they left him there for dead. After about six or seven hours they went and picked him up and brought him over to the barracks. From then on they told me I could only make the shoes with the boards they used to give me. Only three-quarters of an inch thick.

*(1, A, 252)*
T: Let me ask about the food at Davao Penal Colony. Was what you had better or worse than at Malaybalay?

A: The food at Davao was worse. In close to three years there, we had exactly one hard boiled egg each there. Once. Once they had eggs and there weren’t enough to go around, so they scrambled them, and we had one spoonful of scrambled eggs. No bread.

T: Was it possible to do any gardening, or raising of your own food?

A: (laughs) Once they gave us a chance to have a little plot, maybe about three [feet] by six [feet], a piece of land, so myself, and Bob Dowding and a few other friends of mine we started to put some figs there, you know. The ground was a little sandy, but it rained a couple times a week. Hot weather, rain, it was easy to come up [get things to grow]. So we tried to grow a little bit, but it wasn’t enough to do anything.

T: Some POWs talk about cigarettes as being a valuable thing to have. What do you remember about that?

A: I remember, if you had cigarettes, a lot of them POWs maybe used to give you rice for a cigarette, but I never smoked. So for me, I used to eat the rice and let somebody else smoke the cigarettes.

T: I’d like to ask about the importance of close friends for you as a POW.

A: Yes, I had very good friends. In fact, one was from California, Tracy. Another one was from Montana, by the name of Keller. Couple from Texas. I had a lot of friends.

T: In what ways were friends important in everyday life, for you as a POW?

A: Well, we used to talk. For example, we talked about Thanksgiving—we didn’t want for Thanksgiving to come in November, we wanted it to come every month. And we talked about food. Food, food, food (laughs). And very seldom were we talking about women. In fact, a lot of people they say, when I go home I’m going to make a pie, even with sweet potatoes. Food.

T: What about Red Cross packages?

A: Oh, very few. I think that we got maybe three, four packages, but not a single package for everyone. I still got a soap box that I got in 1943. I still have it. And a fellow by the name of Reed, from Los Angeles, he was working for the newspaper Examiner, he engraved it for me. I still have it. It says—I used to be a sergeant, you know—it says, “Abraham Sergeant Sabbatini, from the Red Cross, Davao Penal Colony,” and then the date “1943”. I brought that home with me, and I still got it. I still have the top of a (**), engraved with the name of every place that I went, from Davao to Japan and all over. I was in Japan at the end.
T: Now you were in Davao for quite a long time, weren’t you?

A: I think we were in Davao from [October] 1942 to [mid-] 1944. And then in ’44 we went to Japan.

T: Did you go from Davao to Lasang, and then to Japan, as some other POWs have described?

A: I didn’t go to Lasang. At Lasang they were building a runway field. The Japanese put up a note, and it said: If you want to volunteer to go to Lasang, we give you better food, and so forth and so forth. And we’ll treat you much better. So what I was doing, I was thinking to go, and one day I was talking to a major by the name of, of Rotherham, from Mountain View, and he asked me, “Sabbatini, where you going?” So I told him that I thought I was going to leave to go to Lasang. He grabbed me by the shorts and my chest and he said, “You’re crazy. You’re going to volunteer when I volunteer.” And I said, “Why, major?” And he said, “Lasang is a small detail. They can kill you, every one, and nobody will know about it. In here [at Davao] we are over two thousand. You stay right here. Stay put.” And I was lucky. Of eight hundred fellows that went to build the damn field at Lasang, they left Lasang [in September 1944] on a ship [the Shinyo Maru]. On the way to Japan they were torpedoed by the American submarines. Out of more than eight hundred, eighty-one survived.

T: So once again you had good luck, it seems.

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 000.

T: What about luck? How did it matter for you?

A: Let me tell you another time. I remember now, when I was in Pennsylvania, just three or four months back from Italy [thus 1929-30], one man was related to my grandmother, but I didn’t know it. He wanted to see me, it was on a Friday, he was in the hospital. So I told him, “I never went to the hospital in the USA yet on a Friday. Superstitious. And on Friday the poor guy died. Sometimes luck, or superstition, you know...

T: Is there a time when luck came into play when you were a POW?

A: (laughs) Well, I was lucky to come back! Out of our company only about thirty-eight or thirty-nine came back. Less than forty. And on the way from Davao we stopped in Zamboanga [in southwest Mindanao]. When I was in Zamboanga on board ship, and it was around nighttime, we don’t have no lavatory, nothing. They had a five-gallon cans outside on the rail. So we were outside on the rail, waiting to
use the, the can, and all of a sudden we heard the machine gun (machine gun sound). An American colonel jumped overboard, and we were right there. I threw myself way down to the steps, the steps were made out of steel steps. And when I got to the bottom I felt blood and I thought, oh, I got shot. But then I was relieved to see that I wasn’t shot, it was just a scratch. I was lucky.

T: You were a POW for a long time. How many opportunities did you have to communicate with people, family back in the USA, a postcard or a letter?

A: They gave us a chance a couple of times, I think. The only way that my relatives found out that I was still alive was through Bob Dowding. Dowding, he was working in the Japanese office, to keep the medical books. So one day he came home and he told me, he said, “Abe, I got a chance to write back home.” So I told him, I said, “Dowding, I’m going to tell you one thing. Please do it for me.” He asked me what. “Say hello to your folks.” “My folks don’t know you—they never met you.” “I know it—but I’ll tell you what. Tell your folks that Abe Sabbatini says hello to you, and says hello to his uncle and aunt in Glen Lyon, Pennsylvania.” And he did it. He did. And the Red Cross found my uncle and aunt and told them that I was still alive. They knew that I was still alive then.

T: I’d like to ask another question about Davao, about the treatment you received from the Japanese, or that you observed them giving to other prisoners.

A: In Davao we had an interpreter we used to call (***). The interpreter, we talked to him, he was a very mean son of a gun. That interpreter, he lived in San Francisco for quite a few years. He knew San Francisco better than I did. He was a house boy for some rich people in San Francisco, in Pacific Heights. That’s what he told us. The people he was working for, they had a maid, and she was white. And he was a Japanese. He told us that the (***). So the owner, they took him for crazy, and they sent him to the crazy house, in Napa, to recover. And he told us, “I wasn’t crazy. I was in love with the woman. And for that they took me for crazy. That’s why I don’t like the American people anymore.” But he was a mean son of a gun.

T: What about the guards you saw on a daily basis. Talk about the treatment you received from them.

A: Well, the guards used to tell you what to do, what not to do, that’s all. If you don’t do what they say, they used to beat you up. But it never happened to me. I tell you what happened to me. In Japan, the first camp we were at was Yokkaichi. And the barracks there where we were living, it was an open—no window or nothing else. So we asked them if they would give us some wood, so we could close up the windows. So they gave us some wood, and with the cuttings from the wood we started a little fire in a five-gallon can. Because it was cold, you know. In the meantime, the American planes came over, the B-29s. Of course the smoke went up from the barracks. The Japanese officer, he told us that we were giving the signal to the planes, you know. He took about ten of us, he put is in a line, and he took off the
belt, big army belt. And we had to stand to attention, and right across the face, about four, five, six times each. You couldn’t even move—if you move even your arm, you got double. Yes.

T: Did being beaten physically happen to you on more than one occasion?

A: Oh yes. More than once. Like I said, it all depended on the individual. If the individual didn’t like you... Like I remember one night, we had to go to the, the lavatory, and you had to pass a Japanese guard. When you got to the Japanese guard you had to stop and salute him, you know. One fellow, he was from Texas, poor guy, it was nighttime, and when he went through there he was whistling. They took him, took off his shoes—he had these leather shoes—and they hit him all around the feet and face. We went to see him a couple days later and his face was like a balloon. It so depended on the individual. It was unpredictable.

T: You were at Davao for about two years. In what ways did things change at Davao during the time you were there?

A: It was about the same. At Davao, before we were there the Filipinos had a big farm—that was an experimental farm. The Japanese destroyed everything, like the big avocado. They cut off the avocado. We asked them, “Why you cut them off for?” He said, “Because we’re going to send them to Formosa, to make yoke for the caribou.”

And then one day, they called for volunteers, it was on Sunday, and they called for volunteers to go for, for coconuts. So we thought we were going to go and pick the coconuts and bring them back to the camp. Instead, when we went outside the camp we stopped in front of the Japanese guard and they give us an axe and a saw. So we said, “What is this?” We had to cut down the coconut tree because they were too close to the barracks. They were afraid that the Filipino guerillas to come over in nighttime, see? So we couldn’t even touch one coconut.

Now when you split the coconut tree, the heart of the tree is tender, you know? A lot of the old timers, they knew about that. They split it, and they went down and put some in their mouth. The Japanese came over with the butt of the rifle and hit them right on the head. They had to spit it out. (pauses three seconds) Oh, they were a mean son of a gun.

(1, B, 105)

T: At Davao, were you able to get information about how the war was going?

A: Yes. In Davao, I tell you what, before that, before we were captured, we had a radio from a torpedo boat that came in from Manila. Boat got hit, but they saved the radio. So we took the radio with us. And every day I listened to news from Shanghai, they were saying it in Italian. One day I told the company commander, “You know, it’s getting bad. Singapore fell.” I think it was February the fifteenth or sixteenth [1942—date is correct]. He said, “How do you know?” “That’s what the
Italian news said from Shanghai, that Singapore fell.” He said, “You’re crazy. You and your Italians are crazy.” So at nighttime we used to listen to a station from San Francisco, and they repeated that Singapore fell.

Now in Davao, they had a little radio. But only a few knew about the radio, only a couple. Every now and then this officer, he used to come over after me, and he said, “Abe, you know the cities over in Italy?” I used to tell him, “Yeah, yeah.” By now, the Americans had invaded Italy [thus this was 1943], and they wanted to know about the rivers, the mountains, and the cities that the Americans went through.

T: So you knew the geography?

A: Yes, that’s right.

T: So at Davao you had some information.

A: On Davao we had some information, like that the Americans had conquered Libya, and North Africa. And then that they landed in Sicily and then Italy.

Another thing about North Africa. A soldier from Texas, he got a letter from his people, you know. They told him, they said, you remember Uncle So-and-so, that he had the big farm on the other side of the lake. What he had to do, he had to abandon the farm because he couldn’t get no more workers to work for him. He said, now he have the land by itself. We knew then that Germans and Italia, they had lost Libya. Follow me?

T: Yes.

A: He got this letter at Davao. It was in 1943 [Libya fell to Allied forces January 1943]

(1, B, 140)

T: Mr. Sabbatini, did you yourself get any mail or any kind if communication there at Davao?

A: No, no, no. Very few got the mail, very, very few.

T: Did you ever worry what the Japanese might do to the POWs, to you, if they lost the war?

A: Well, no. (pauses three seconds) We all of us thought that we was going to win the war anyway. In fact it was my company commander, by the name of Brandett, he was a captain, and he bet me. “Sergeant Abe, I want to tell you one thing. For 1943 we’ll be in San Francisco.” So I told him, “Captain, can I talk to you man to man?” He said of course. I said, “You gone to the university, you know the geography better than I do. But think about Australia, New Zealand, and all the way up, all them
islands. Before you chase all the Japanese from every island it won't be 1943, it will be maybe a year or two years later.” He told me, “You want to bet?” I said, “I never bet, captain. But I tell you, the winner is going to pay for three days. You take your wife to San Francisco, and I’ll take my girlfriend to San Francisco, for three days. You can spend anything you want, go anywhere you want—the loser is going to pay for that.” He said, “That’s a deal.” And I got a card from him, and it said, “I’m sorry, not because I lost, but because we were not in San Francisco in 1943. Best regards.” He wrote on the back of his photo.

T: How worried were you about what the Japanese might do if they lost the war? They could have killed all POWs.

A: We didn’t think about that. Because we thought they was going to lose; they didn’t have a chance.

T: We’ve talked a lot about different aspects of your time at Davao. What do you think, overall, was the most difficult thing during those years at Davao?

A: The most difficult thing for us was that we were waiting for the day to come home. The waiting for it to be over. I always said, I’m going to go back to San Francisco. I told you before about the worms and everything. Doctor Brickley, he told us, the worms don’t kill you, but if you don’t eat you’re going to kill yourself. So we closed our eyes, and ate. A lot of them, especially the big people, six foot three or so, they weigh about two hundred pounds, they had it hard.

One guy said, “If I don’t go home for Christmas, I’m going to die.” And quite a few they did, especially three or four from Pennsylvania. They did die. They gave up.

T: For you, how did you not give up?

A: Because I wanted to get back to USA. I was determined.

T: Let me ask about determination, or rather about faith. Were you a religious person at that time?

A: All the time, all the time. I said my prayer morning and night, every day. Not overly religious, but we had a couple of priests with us, and they were very, very good. One was Lafleur and one was Brown. Captain Brown, when he came out he was a major, he was a priest for the American Indians. He used to tell us, he said, “The money that I make I’m going to finish the church that I started so many years ago.” And he came home. I saw with my own eyes, that sometimes, when he saw one POW who was skinny and he couldn’t eat, he used to go over and give a couple spoonfuls of his rice. He used to tell them, “You eat. You eat.” The priests, they were very, very good.

(1, B, 207)

Oral History Project: World War II Years, 1941-1946 – Abe Sabbatini
Interview © 2004 by Thomas Saylor
T: Let me move at this point to your next POW location. You were taken from Davao, along with other POWs, in the middle of 1944.

A: Yes.

T: Then some months after that you ended up in Japan, in Moji.

A: Yes.

T: That’s a long trip, from the Philippines to Japan.

A: Three months, less two days.

T: What do you remember about that ship journey to Japan?

A: That trip, I remember we stopped in Cebu [on Mindanao], I think. Then from Cebu we went to Manila [on Luzon]. We stopped in Manila for a week, or ten days, inside the ship. I think once they gave us a chance to go and take a shower over in Bilibid [Prison]. Then we boarded another ship, I think the ship that we went to Japan on was made in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1920 or 1921.

T: So you were on one ship that took you to Manila, and then another for the trip to Japan.

A: One ship took us to Manila, and then we boarded another ship in Manila, because that other one was too small. It couldn’t make the trip to go to Japan.

T: The ship you were on out of Manila, did it stop at Formosa?

A: Yes, it stopped in Takao, Formosa for two days.

T: What were the conditions like on board that ship, Mr. Sabbatini?

A: Oh my god. The conditions on board the ship, we had very little water. You couldn’t wash your face, you couldn’t take a bath, you couldn’t do nothing. They used to give us, two times a day, one cup of rice, with no vegetable, no meat, nothing—only salt. And you know these five-gallon cans? A five-gallon can for fifty people. Not even one cup each. It was water, rice, and worms.

T: Being closely packed together, how did people keep themselves sane, from what you observed?

A: You couldn’t even move. Sometimes, between friends, you used to say, “You go down and lie down for two, three hours, and then I’ll come down," you know. There was no light, nothing. (pauses three seconds) It was terrible, terrible.
T: Who were you with on board that ship?

A: I was with Dowding, and a lot of other friends. People I knew from Davao.

T: What was the most difficult thing for you on board that ship?

A: On board the ship, the most difficult thing... You would think, when we going to arrive, when we going to arrive, if we going to arrive. Because, I tell you what, when we left Manila, the Japanese had close to twenty ships, in a big convoy. The Japanese, they had a couple destroyers, and so forth. Then after two days we were by ourselves, because one of the boilers broke, it blew up. Some of the crew on board the ship, they were from Korea. Some of the crew told us that the convoy got torpedoed by the Americans, and they lost nine ships. So we were lucky.

T: The ship you were on, was it attacked by aircraft or submarines, at least as far as you can tell?

A: No, only once, I think. The Japanese, they blew the whistle, they said submarine. But they dropped a few bombs all around, but we didn't see anything. That was the only time.

T: Was there fear on your part of being sunk by the Americans?

A: Of course! We used to tell the Japanese about the Geneva [Convention on the treatment of POWs]. They said, “We don't have nothing to do with the Geneva.” Because the ship should have had a red cross and then a light when they traveled at nighttime. But the Japanese never did.

T: You finally arrived in Moji, Japan.

A: It was September 2, 1944.

T: What was it like to finally get off the ship?

A: When we finally got off the ship, on September 2, we didn't have no clothing. We had only one pair of jeans, and one shirt, and so forth. Quite a few, after we got to Moji, quite a few died after a week or so, died of pneumonia. Quite a few, they got colds. We didn't have no clothing.

T: Not for that weather.

A: No.

T: When you got off the ship there in Moji, were there people around? Did you actually see Japanese people?
A: When we got off the ship, we was wondering, why did they take us away from the Philippines? And then we thought about it, and came to the conclusion that the Japanese, they was losing the war fast, you know. We thought, that's why they take us away.

But when we got to Japan, we didn’t have much (**) to, to talk with the civilians, because we had to work all the time, and with the Japanese guards. And in Japan, in the first nine months that we worked, we work eight hours a day. Then when we moved to Toyama [in early June 1945] we worked twelve hours a day.

T: Twelve hours a day?

A: Twelve hours a day in Toyama.

T: Start with Yokkaichi, the first location. What kind of work were you doing at Yokkaichi?

A: At Yokkaichi we worked on a steel mill and acid plant. We used to unload the freight, put them on the little buggy, you know, and push them over to the plant and put them inside the big, big... there was a big electric (**). They used to put all the iron all around in there. Then every now and then we used to go down to, to relieve the iron from the barn. It was hard work. It was hard work because you didn’t have much strength to do it. You couldn’t do it.

T: You worked eight hours a day there at Yokkaichi, right?

A: Yes.

T: Did you sleep in the plant, too, or were there barracks somewhere else?

A: In Yokkaichi, I think, they made the barracks [in] the barn; they didn’t have no planks in the barn, they used to use, you know, on the steel mill, after you draw all the lead out, it’s like a steel sand. That’s what they threw in the (**), and you had a blanket and we put in on top.

T: Did you have to walk to work each day, then?

A: We had to walk.

T: Did you have Japanese guards there at the place you worked?

A: Oh yes, the Japanese guard was on top of you all the time. Oh yes. In fact, we worked all the time, and we would never rest. Every now and then we used to ask them to go to the bathroom, or you want a drink of water. They used to give you the time, then if you asked too often, you know, they wouldn’t let you go.
T: From your memory, how did there Japanese guards compare to those at Davao?

A: Well, I think in Japan they were worse than Davao. They wanted to be (***) In Japan it was a different work, you see. In Davao you work on the field, the rice field. Instead, in Japan, it was more industry where you worked.

T: These guards, Army personnel or civilians?

A: Some was Army and some was civilian.

T: Did the guards expect you to understand Japanese?

A: Oh yes. They used to talk to us in Japanese, but every now and then they used to say a few words in English.

T: So you had to learn a few words of Japanese.

A: The only thing that I know in Japanese is to count from one to one hundred, and then, to rest. Work is (Japanese: sagoro). We used to say (Japanese: sagoro taksan yasu menei), "We work a lot, but we never rest."

T: Did you have a work number, or an ID number?

End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.

A: I think my number was two hundred something. I don't know it in Japanese (laughs).

T: Was there physical punishment from the guards there at Yokkaichi?

A: Oh yes, yes. They always carried a rifle, also a stick. If they wanted, they come over to hit you right on the head or the shoulder.

T: That was at Davao, too, right, that kind of treatment?

A: That was at Davao, too, yes.

T: How long did you stay at Yokkaichi?

A: Let me see... Yokkaichi we went September 4 [1944], and to Toyama June 1 [1945].

T: Were you at Yokkaichi for the earthquake, on December 7, 1944?

A: Oh yes. The big earthquake that we had, it was December 7. We were working, and over Yokkaichi they had a tower where the Japanese had a big, big factory. All
the smokestacks used to go through this tower. They said it was the tallest smokestack in Asia. When the earthquake came, of course we went outside from the work detail, and the Japanese told us to stay close to the wall, you know. We saw the tower go back and forth, back and forth, and then all of a sudden about fifty feet from the top it came down. It broke, and then came down. They had water line in Yokkaichi, it broke, and then the tidal wave came in. The tidal wave, oh my god, big wave of water came in. They evacuate us to a hill, way up on the hill. I remember that a lot of windows and glass doors, they floated on the water. A fellow, friend of ours, name of Wood, he stepped right through it, the door, he didn't see that it was glass, and he cut his leg. The doctor that was with us, he took off his shirt and tied his leg very tight. After about four, five, six hours we came back to the barracks.

T: Was that the first time that you had experienced something like an earthquake?

A: I had the experience of a little quake like in San Francisco, but nothing like that. That was the biggest quake that I have ever had in my life.

T: Were you able to work after the quake, or was the factory damaged?

A: The factory was damaged. The only thing, we had big tanks of, of acid, but they never spilled. Otherwise it would have destroyed all the big, big factory.

T: Did your work change then, or could you go back to work?

A: The following day we have to, to repair the road, the railroad line and so forth, and then we went back and started to work in the factory.

T: At Yokkaichi, did you ever see American planes come over?

A: I remember the first American plane came over, it was in 1945, in February, I think.

T: So you were still at Yokkaichi at that time.

A: At Yokkaichi, yes. We were going out, it was early in the morning. We was going out to work, and the siren blew, for air raid. So the Japanese sent us back to the barracks. And we could see four streams of vapor, way, way high, you know. And then we thought, what is it? What kind of a plane is this? It can't be a B-17, because a B-17 wouldn't fly that high. Then we asked one of the Japanese later on, and he told us, he said (Japanese: B ni jiu koo), which means B-29. That was the first time that we heard that we had a new plane. And then in nighttime they came over around seven o'clock at night, across from Yokkaichi was Nagoya, they came to bomb Nagoya. The first few planes came over at the beginning, before the bombing, and they dropped what was like a Christmas tree lights, you know. To light it. And then the planes came over to bomb, one plane after the other, until about three or four o'clock in the morning.
T: You could see Nagoya being bombed?

(2, A, 55)

A: Oh yes, we could see Nagoya being bombed. See, Nagoya was eight, nine miles from us, across the bay.

T: What was that like from your view?

A: We could see a lot of explosions, and a lot of anti-aircraft [guns]. We saw a couple of planes go down, too. American planes.

T: Let me ask whether you worried, there in Japan, about what the Japanese might do to you POWs if they lost the war?

A: No, we didn't. At least I didn't. The only thing is, we were worried that they would bomb us, because our barracks didn't have no red cross on it or nothing. We were afraid that sometime, by mistake, that we would be bombed.

T: Did that ever happen?

A: The only thing that happened, in Toyama, I think when we were working on the big seaport in a big steel mill, they came over and bombed, and one of the bombs it dropped about four or five miles away from the object. It came over close to our kitchen. It blew up our kitchen. Lucky that nobody was there.

T: So at Yokkaichi or Toyama, you never were bombed any more than that.

A: No.

T: Mr. Sabbatini, let me back up and ask how you POWs were transported from Moji to Yokkaichi, because that's a long way.

A: We went by train.

T: Did the Japanese simply place all the POWs from the ship onto the train?

A: Yes, on the train. It was only about a couple hundred miles or something.

T: And from Yokkaichi to Toyama?

A: Same thing, by train.

T: When you moved from Yokkaichi to Toyama, did all the American POWs go together?
A: No. No, from Yokkaichi to Toyama about six hundred of us. The rest they remained there. Then when we got to Toyama it was a big camp. We found a lot of Dutch POWs, a lot of Australians, a lot from Canada.

T: So this was an already existing camp, and not just Americans now.

A: That was an existing camp, yes.

T: What were the conditions like there at Toyama?

A: The conditions there at Toyama was a little better. We couldn’t get a shower, but they had a place you could use for a bathroom, and you could have a little rag and wash yourself sometimes. Better than Yokkaichi.

T: What kind of work were you doing there at Toyama?

A: Like I said, we used to unload the ship, and then we used to take all the material and put them on the car and push it to inside the factory. Sometimes is was scrap iron, and sometimes it was a statue of a Buddha, a big bell, even money. You know, a barrel full of money, to put inside the furnace. To melt down for the metal. We used to move all the scrap and put it inside the furnace.

(2, A, 95)

T: Was this harder work than what you did at Yokkaichi, or not?

A: Well, it was about the same. You have to work. I remember one day, in Toyama, a friend of mine from Pittsburgh, he was pushing a little car on the hill and he slipped and fell down. The wheel of the car went right through, close to his head, and pushed part of the scalp out. Dr Brinkley asked the Japanese, he said, “I can’t have anything to help him. The only thing you can do is to take him to the hospital.” And the Japanese answered, “The American is not a soldier (***).” Poor guy. He took him into the barracks, and he had some peroxide. He told me, he said, “Abe, you pull the hair up, I’m going to wash it with peroxide.” But after about four or five days, he died. They let him die. I collect his dog tag, his prayer book, and his address, and then I took his ashes in a little box, the Japanese give it to us, and I took it with me until I get back from overseas. When we got to San Francisco, my girlfriend and I, she’s my wife now, she shipped them to the parents in Pittsburgh. And we sent them a letter. I still have the letter.

T: That happened at Toyama, so that was right close to the end of the war.

A: Yes. Only a few days before the end of the war. Maybe ten days.
T: How did you experience the end of the war, Mr. Sabbatini? When and how did you find out that the war was actually over?

A: Well, I'll tell you about the end of the war. In Toyama, the Japanese had an office. They used to have a sick POW, someone who couldn't go to work, to go in and clean the office. We had an understanding, one of the POWs, by the name of Bowes, he was from Salt Lake City, he was a Mormon. He could speak Japanese and read Japanese. But nobody knew about that. He told the guard to bring all the newspaper to him before you take it to go to the bathroom, see. So they came over to him with that newspaper, and he read it, that the Americans had dropped a bomb equal to tons of TNT. But we didn't know about any atomic bomb.

T: So you found out about the end of the war because this particular fellow could read Japanese?

A: This fellow could read Japanese, yes.

T: Well, when did the Japanese tell you?

A: The day that they dropped that bomb, I was working at nighttime. We came home in the morning, and after about a couple or three hours the night shift came in, and they say, “What happened?” He said that the Japanese had send them home and they shut down the factory. They told us that some of the machinery didn't work. So we were in there a couple of days, and then about four or five days after they bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki [on 6 and 9 August 1945, respectively] a Japanese commander came to us, and he was speaking beautiful English. He called us all outside the barracks, and he told us, he said, “The war has ended. You are the winner, and we are the loser. You can go out [of the camp] if you want to, but I would advise you not to go out until the Americans come in, because I'm afraid of the civilian. They rebel against you people. So what I'm going to do, I'm going to reinforce the guard so nobody would come in.”

So we went inside in there, and at the end of August I think, around the twenty-something of August, a plane, a Navy plane came over and circled the camp, and he bobbled the wings, and then he flew high and dropped a parachute. He made the parachute with handkerchief and two packs of chewing gum inside, with a note. Somebody, he picked up the note and he opened it, and then he read it. The note said, “We know where you are. Tomorrow a B-29 will be in with the food. Please stay inside the barracks, otherwise you might get hurt.” The following day the B-29 came in. Boy, you should have seen it—they dropped powdered milk in a fifty-gallon can, and sugar. Some of the cans, it fell in the rice field, some fell on the road, they blew up. But they dropped so much food, then clothing, that we had a lot of food. In fact, when we left on September 5, we left a lot of food behind, because we couldn't carry it with us.

[2, A, 163]
T: So September 5 was the day you actually left the camp at Toyama.

A: Yes, it was September 5 that we left Toyama.

T: Did Americans actually come to get you, to pick you up?

A: Before that, one evening, an American came in, and he told us, “You stay inside. You stay in there. Don’t go out. Stay in there until we come over and get you.” Then they came over and got us, and they took us I think by truck and then by train and then by a boat. I think, September 7 I was on board an American destroyer, and I had the first shower in eight months. It was my birthday—September 7. At dinner I told them, “Today is the first time I took a shower in eight months, and today is my birthday, too.” This guy said, “Super day”—then they came out with a big dish of ice cream. I hadn’t had ice cream for four years.

T: What about the adjustment to all of a sudden eating food. How did you handle that?

A: When they dropped the food in Toyama, there was notices in there. It said, “Don’t eat too much. One can of this here, split it in two. Hershey chocolate, one a day. One can of spam, divide it in some many. Don’t eat too much, because your stomach is too small.” That was the advice.

T: Okay, that was the advice. Now, what did people do?

A: A couple didn’t do what they say (laughs). They got sick.

T: And you?

A: No, no. I did what they told me to do.

T: Suddenly you’re out of this POW experience there at Toyama. What were your feelings at that time towards the Japanese?

A: Well, you know, you don’t think too much. (pauses three seconds) You think to go home. That’s all. You think, when I go home I’ll do this here, I’ll do this here, I’ll do this here.

T: How soon were you able to contact your family in the USA?

A: I’ll tell you what happened to me. When we left Japan we flew to an island, we stopped there for a day I think, and then we flew down to Manila, on a B-24. Then when we got to Manila, when I got off the plane there, somebody was calling, “Sergeant Sabbatini, Sergeant Sabbatini.” So I said, “I’m Sergeant Sabbatini, what is it?” “I got a telegram for you.” It was my cousin, a navy lieutenant, that I didn’t see
for ten years. He requested through the Red Cross if I was aboard the plane. So I met him, and then he give the news, he telephoned back home that I was okay.

T: So pretty quickly your family was able to find out that you were okay.

(2, A, 209)

A: That’s right.

T: How did you get back to San Francisco.

A: By ship.

T: What kind of medical attention were you getting in the Philippines, or on that ship back to the USA?

A: In the Philippines (laughs) they told us to throw out all the clothing. They showered us there on board the ship. We got to San Francisco, and I spent another three or four days, in the Presidio, in the hospital there. When I arrived in San Francisco I had about twenty friends of mine waiting there for me. I knew people in San Francisco—I lived there for five years, see.

They gave me three months off, because we never had a day off. They gave us three months. In the meantime, in December [1945] I got married. My wife’s name is Emma. December 9, 1945. Then we took a trip to Pennsylvania to see my aunt and uncle, to Glen Lyon.

Everybody came over to see me, they invite me. A lot of the clubs, they give me dinner. Then when we went to Pennsylvania they gave us a big dinner. There was a lot of Polish friends that I had. They played a polka, and boy the building was shaking.

T: Now when you got back to see family, and friends, how much did people ask you about your time as a POW?

A: Sometimes, sometimes. But most of all they were glad to see me alive.

T: When people did ask you questions about your POW time, how much did you tell them?

(2, A, 255)

A: Well, it all depends. A lot of people might tell you, “You’re lucky you come back alive.” See, a lot of them, when you tell them what you went through, a lot of them, they believe it, and a lot of them, they won’t believe it. A lot of them, no.

T: How did you respond to people who don’t believe what you say?
A: The only thing, I used to say, "I wish that you were in my place."

T: Let me ask about your wife, Emma. You've been married how long, more than fifty years?

A: Fifty-eight years.

T: How much did your wife ask you about your POW experience?

A: You can ask her.

T: Mrs. Sabbatini, was Abe willing to talk about his POW experience?

Emma Sabbatini: He was always willing to tell me. I was curious to know. I didn’t have to ask him questions, because he would volunteer all the information.

T: Mr. Sabbatini, when did you get out of the service?

A: It was February [1946].

T: What did you do when you got out of the service?

A: When I got out of the service I went to work, back to the plumbing company. Living in San Francisco. We got married [in December 1945], and we lived in San Francisco for three years.

T: What was it like to be back to civilian life again?

A: It was a pleasure (laughs).

T: So you didn’t consider a career in the military?

A: No.

T: Back at work, was this with the same people you had worked with before you left, back in 1941?

A: Yes.

T: So they knew you.

A: Yes. But I worked with the same people for just a little bit, and then I went to work with a big company. Then I worked with the same company for thirty-two years, until I retired. In San Francisco. I retired in, I think it was 1974.

(2, A, 300)
T: How much did your co-workers, at either job, ask you about being a POW?

A: Oh, quite a few asked.

T: And did they believe what you told them?

A: It all depends on who you’re talking to, you know. Most of them believed it, though, most of the people.

T: Did all the people you worked with know you had been a POW?

A: Well, some they knew, and some not.

T: Back to the USA, back to civilian life, Mr. Sabbatini, did you have dreams or nightmares that were about your POW time?

A: Yes, every now and then. I tell you what, our young son, when he was about eight, ten, or twelve months old, and I was sitting on the couch with my aunt, and he was playing with a balloon. All of a sudden the balloon exploded, and I said, “Hit the ground.” I jumped from the couch and went on to the floor.

T: And dreams or nightmares while you were sleeping?

A: A lot. Many, many times. I still do that.

T: What kind of things?

A: Things that you went through, friends that you see getting beat up, and the food that we used to eat. This would come through my dreams every now and then.

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 000.

T: A few final questions. We’ve had a fairly long and open conversation about your time as a POW. Say I had talked to you some years ago, say in 1950 or in 1960, and would you have had the same conversation with me, do you think?

A: Oh yes.

T: So you have always been comfortable talking about your POW experience, from the time you got back to the USA?

A: Oh yes.

T: In a larger sense, what do you think is the most important way that the POW experience changed you, or changed your life?
A: The most important thing I experienced as a POW that, I don’t know if you can understand what I say, but you have a lot of friends, but you can’t trust everybody. You can’t trust everybody. That’s the way, because I saw it with my own eyes. A lot of people, they were good friends, and then if you had anything they steal you left and right.

T: Prisoners stole from each other?

A: That’s right. You trust people, but be careful. Be always careful.

T: You said that you had a couple of pretty close friends while you were a POW. Did you depend on those people, could you trust those people?

A: Yes. The ones that I had, like Bob Dowding, who was a very, very good friend of mine, yes. In fact, we’re still friends. Another one, in Pennsylvania, Loftus, he was not even eighteen when he enlisted. When I met him in Albuquerque, we came in from Aberdeen, Maryland. It was about two o’clock in the morning, and when I saw they wrote names on the bulletin board, and one of them was Mate. I knew a Mate from Scranton, but he wasn’t on the bus when it came in. I asked, “Where is Mate, from Scranton?” No Mate. But this Loftus, he said, “I’m from Scranton.” He was eighteen years old. He was young, so I talked to him, I said, “Loftus, you better be careful. I’m going to tell you, be careful of that, be careful of that. They are friendly to you, but they’ll steal from your back.” When he met my oldest son in Scranton a few years ago, he said, “Julian, your father is not only father to you, he’s father to me, too.” I was almost ten years older than him, so I could be like a father to him. He told him the whole history. We call each other three or four times a year, all the time.

T: Since the war, Mr. Sabbatini, have you kept in contact with people you were POWs with?

A: Oh yes. From 1945. I am still in contact with Bob Dowding, with Bob in Pennsylvania, and the other one in, in California, he died. Another one, from Spokane, he died, and Frank from Oswego, New York, too. Quite a few died now.

T: How would you describe the friendship you have with those men?

A: The friends that I had in the war, they were good friends. One or the other would help each other. They were very, very good friends. A closer friend than people I worked with.

T: When you talk on the phone with these people, or when you see people like Bob Dowding, what do you most talk about?

(3, A, 53)
A: Sometimes we talk about the POW time, otherwise we talk about, you know, the family and the work, and so forth. Different kinds of things.

T: That’s the last question I have, Mr. Sabbatini. Is there anything you want to say or to add?

A: One other thing I’m going to tell you. When we were in Toyama, in the foundry there, right outside, on the seaport, there’s a big mountain of rocks. The rocks were flat, about one inch thick. What we used to do, we used to take the rocks and put them inside the furnace. They would stay in there five or six hours, and then we used to take them out from the furnace, and put them in big vats of water. When it was cool, take it out from the water, break it with a hammer into small pieces, and they used to put them in sacks and take them away. So we used to ask them, “What do you do with that?” “We use them to make plutonium.” I don’t know if it’s true or not, that they make plutonium from that.

T: Of those two places, Yokkaichi and Toyama, which was more difficult for you?

A: I think Yokkaichi was worse, because the conditions were better at Toyama.

T: Because you said you worked longer hours there at Toyama.

A: We did—we worked twelve hours. And then, every week they used to change shifts, and when you changed shifts it was eighteen hours [of work].

T: Did you work every day of the week?

A: We did in the Philippines, but then they gave us Sunday off. In Japan they used to give us Sunday off. One day a week.

T: Mr. Sabbatini, I’ve enjoyed speaking with you. At this point I’ll thank you very much for this interview, and turn the machine off.

END OF INTERVIEW