

Innocent Phone Call Branded Island Woman a Spy

By MARK WATERS

A Japanese woman once tabbed as a spy disclosed today to the Star-Bulletin the truth behind a telephone call from Tokyo that sent her to a U.S. detention camp for four years.

And Mrs. Ishiko Mori of 702 Wyllie Street denies she was ever a spy.

The telephone call came from the Tokyo newspaper Yomiuri.

A reporter named Ogawa wanted to know about daily flights of aircraft here, whether searchlights were being used and the number of ships at Pearl Harbor.

The call, to the Mori home, was on a Friday evening, December 5, 38 hours before Pearl Harbor was bombed.

Also in the course of the conversation the question was asked:

"What kind of flowers are in bloom in Hawaii at present?"

The reply was: "Presently, the flowers in bloom are fewest out of the whole year. However, the hibiscus and the poinsettia are in bloom now."

There is a page devoted to "The Mori Call" in the voluminous report of the Joint Congressional Commit-

tee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack.

The report italicizes the quotes regarding the flowers.

The telephone call, which was monitored by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents using a wire tap, was considered damning evidence of the shortsightedness of the top military leaders here at the time of the sneak attack.

For one thing, the Navy "filed" the telephone conversation until after the attack.

But Lieutenant Colonel George W.

Bicknell, now a retired Army colonel and director of the Honolulu Veterans Administration office, placed great store in the message.

He, as a member of Army Intelligence, saw to it that Major General Walter C. Short at Fort Shafter got a translated version the night of December 6.

Colonel Bicknell told the Congressmen that the special agent in charge of the F.B.I. here was alarmed at what he considered the military implications of the Mori conversation and that he, Bicknell, concurred, considering the

Honolulu Star-Bulletin

Honolulu, T. H., U. S. A., THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1957

Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Vol. 46, No. 291



Phone 5-7911

10^c

in Dec. 1941

conversation as very irregular and highly suspicious.

"But General Short," Bicknell told the Congressional investigating committee, "indicated that I was perhaps too 'intelligence conscious' and that to them the message seemed to be quite in order, and that it was nothing to be excited about."

RAPS COMMANDER

The congressional report then raps the commanders for shortsightedness and says, in italics "The Mori call pointed directly at Hawaii."

To get at the truth, it is necessary to go back to 1929 when Mrs. Mori, then a young girl, came to Honolulu on a visit from her native Japan.

She stayed with a family friend, the late Dr. Iga Mori.

She fell in love with Dr. Mori's son, Motokazu, also a doctor, and the two were married here in 1930.

LAW'S REQUIREMENT

In those days, the immigration law forced her to return to Japan each year for a one year stay before she could return here for one year.

"As a mother," Mrs. Mori said, "my heart was constantly being torn apart by the separations."

She made four round trips, ending up back in Honolulu in 1939.

"I was getting smarter now," she said. "I discovered there were four ways I could remain in the United States . . .

"By being a diplomat, a missionary, an international merchant, or a newspaper reporter.

"I had always wanted to be a writer so I decided now was the time and went to work for the Tokyo Yomiuri as its Honolulu correspondent.

"Very little happened in Honolulu before Pearl Harbor and I sent mostly society stories to the paper.

RECEIVED RADIOGRAM

"Then on Wednesday, December 3, I got a radiogram from the Yomiuri telling me they would telephone Friday and that they wanted to talk to influential members of the Japanese community.

"I went first to Kita, the Japanese consul general here, but he declined. I couldn't get anyone else to talk, either.

"So at last, in desperation, I decided it would have to be my husband.

"Ogawa called Friday.

"I'm sure now that he knew something big was going to happen here. He was laying the groundwork for a big scoop, feature and color copy, when it happened.

"Of course, we didn't know that then.

"Ogawa's radiogram had said he was going to ask 'how are things in Hawaii.'

"My husband answered the questions as best he could.

"He thought it was of interest to Japanese snowed in by winter that hibiscus and poinsettia were in bloom here, so he mentioned that."

PAIR ARRESTED

Mrs. Mori and her husband were arrested late Sunday, December 7. They spent four years in internment camps.

Mrs. Mori, a vibrant, highly intelligent person, was asked point-blank if she or her husband had ever spied for Japan.

She laughed. "Of course not. I loved Japan, I still do, but I was never disloyal to the United States.

"Gradually I am learning to love America the most and when my heart tells me I am sincere, I will become a citizen.

"One good thing came from the war. I am allowed to stay here with my husband and children. Can you understand how I feel as a mother?"