



## The Hours Seemed Like Days

### The FBI in Honolulu in 1941

by Raymond J. Batvinis, PhD

At 7:55 on the morning on 7 December 1941, twenty-two year old Dwayne Logan Eskridge, a radio technician, found himself in the FBI's Honolulu office, sitting at his radio transmitter in the gun vault spinning dials, checking frequencies and tightening wires. He was a quiet country kid; born in Nebraska and raised in Tempe, Arizona, a dusty little cowboy town just six miles from downtown Phoenix where ranchers raised cattle and farmers grew barley and alfalfa on fields that seemed to go on forever. His Methodist parents came to Arizona from other parts of the country. Claudia, his mother, was born in 1888 in Hastings, a tiny town in the Nebraska territory later known for the creation of the nationally famous powdered soft-drink, Kool-Aid. After graduating from the Nebraska Conservatory of Music in 1914, she moved to Arizona where she married Vernon "Mike" Eskridge two years later. After acquiring her teaching credentials at the Tempe Normal School, followed by a college degree at the Tempe State Teachers College, she began a thirty-year teaching career, later supervising and mentoring student teachers at the old Rural School in Tempe. Mike Eskridge, a Kentuckian, arrived in Arizona as a railroad employee. Later he worked as an accountant for a copper mining company in the dusty little western Arizona town of Ray. After a short stay in Pioneer, Arizona, Mike moved his young family to Tempe where he served for years as a municipal judge and later as property manager for



Dwayne Eskridge

Arizona State University.<sup>1</sup>

Dwayne, the eldest of two boys, was born on 11 September 1919 at his mother's hometown of Hastings Nebraska. As a child moving from one small town to another, he found himself attending schools made up primarily of Mexican children, with Dwayne as the only white pupil and his mother teaching the class. Young Eskridge, now fluent in Spanish, completed grammar school in 1936 at the Ira L. Payne College Training School and Tempe Union High School. As a teenager he joined Boy Scout Troop 78 becoming an Eagle Scout at fifteen. As a seventeen year-old scout counselor at the Roosevelt Scout Camp Geronimo near Payson, Arizona, he instructed younger scouts in marksmanship, swimming, electrical signaling and radio. He built and operated a radio station which served as the "only means of contact between Camp Geronimo and Phoenix [Arizona] some 200 [miles] distant" a family history recorded. After completing

college in 1940, he continued scouting as an Assistant Field Commissioner Scout Master.<sup>2</sup>

It was during these early years that his life-long fascination with the wonders of short-wave radio began; probably with an Aero Short Wave set available by mail order for \$5.95. Between chores, homework, and serving as an Eagle Scout, he was usually tinkering with wires, adjusting knobs, studying Morse Code and saving his pennies for radio tubes manufactured by the Neutron Company shipped in their own "attractive container." Today he would be considered a "techno-nerd," his son Rod later recalled, spending endless hours tapping out messages day

and night to stations like WMI at Deal, New Jersey, XDA at Mexico City, 3KAA in Leningrad or JIAA in Tokyo. More hours were spent at his local public library, poring over tattered copies of amateur radio magazines filled with engrossing articles that grabbed

1. "Tempe Couple Honored Twice on 50th Anniversary," *Tempe Daily News*, November 1966; "Private Graveside Services Set for 45-Year Tempean," *Phoenix Gazette*, August 1973; Interview of James Burns, History Curator, Tempe, Arizona History Museum, April 1, 2009.

2. Author interview of Rod Eskridge, 8/20/2011; Author interview of Leann Lecari, 8/22/2011.

the imagination of a youngster eager to learn about a larger world. A.P. Pike's "Getting on the Air" described the efficient design and construction of a short-wave receiver; "Short Waves Outwit the Oyster" explained how radio and sound-waves could locate a given spot over water and "How Short Waves Cut Crime in Hungary" described police applications of this new technology. Other articles focused on technical issues like band-spreaders, improved antenna coupling, monitor circuits for use when transmitting and the importance preventing "howling." Advertisements like "Radio Made Easy to Learn at Home" offered home study courses.<sup>3</sup>

Eskridge majored in chemistry and education with minors in mathematics and radio at Tempe State Teachers College, site of the "Old Main," the original campus building constructed when Arizona was still a territory. Following graduation in May 1940, he continued taking night courses in meteorology, principles of navigation, and basic theory of flight at a ground school sponsored by the Civil Aeronautics Administration, while teaching seventh grade at Miami, Arizona. Fifteen months later he boarded an east-bound bus in Phoenix for a cross-country journey to Washington, DC, where a new job with the FBI awaited him, to start on August 14, 1941.<sup>4</sup>

As a skilled amateur radio operator, a talent in short supply in the Bureau, he was quickly assigned to the Laboratory Division under the supervision and tutelage of Ivan Willard Conrad, a seven-year FBI veteran. Born and raised in Stilesville, Indiana, Conrad attended University of Indiana where he earned his master's degree in physics with a minor in mathematics and a Phi Beta Kappa key before finishing another year of doctoral studies. Conrad joined the FBI in 1934 as a document examiner before turning to radio communications research and promotion to Special Agent in 1936. His career as a pioneer in radio communications began with his introduction of a number of new technical innovations such as the first radio automobile communication with a central monitoring station. Later he supervised highly secret radio transmissions exchanged between the FBI's first double agent in New York and a German Abwehr station in Hamburg. In August 1941, Hoover ordered him to lead an emergency effort linking Washington with strategic field offices, particularly Juneau, Alaska,

San Juan, Puerto Rico and Honolulu by high-frequency radio.<sup>5</sup>

Over the next four months Conrad, assisted by Eskridge, traveled to the San Diego estate of Herbert Hoover, Jr., son of the former president, where they installed a powerful radio-relay station capable of reaching Juneau and Honolulu on a remote stretch of his property. Following a final test of the station in mid-November 1941, FBI Director Hoover ordered them to move on to Honolulu to set up a similar system. Traveling by ship and arriving in Hawaii just two weeks before the surprise Japanese attack, they discovered that a shortage of suitable sites forced them to improvise by setting up the system in the FBI office on the second floor of the Dillingham Building in downtown Honolulu. Space and security concerns led to the decision to rely on the office's walk-in gun vault which doubled as a photographic darkroom. Following the hasty completion of the station, Conrad returned to Washington leaving Eskridge behind to handle last-minute testing before the system went online. Unbeknownst to Dwayne, Hoover had permanently assigned him on December 1, 1941, as the Honolulu office's first full time radio operator and technician.<sup>6</sup>

Alone on the early morning of December 7 in the cramped, make-shift radio room, Eskridge began sending test messages to San Diego where Jim Corbitt, another FBI radio technician, sat waiting at his relay station. Alerted by sounds of explosions, Eskridge and Frank Sullivan, another young FBI clerk, raced up to the roof where they were suddenly transfixed in horror at the sight of fighter aircraft skirting overhead in the direction of the U.S. Navy anchorage at Pearl Harbor. A half century later, Eskridge still recalled his disbelief at clearly viewing the pilots' facial features through the canopy just feet away as they zoomed past. Quickly gathering his wits, Eskridge ran back to his radio, hoping against hope that Corbitt was still at the other end to receive his warning that America was under Japanese attack. As the deafening noise increased, Eskridge frantically flashed "WFBB from WFNB, if you are still there, stand by for a very urgent and important message." After moments of seemingly endless agony, Corbitt flashed his response. Eskridge then tapped out the attack message to the mainland which was immediately relayed to Washington. Eskridge remained at his station for the next sixty-two hours.<sup>7</sup>

3. "Getting on the Air," *The Experimenter*, April 1925, 372.; "Short Waves Outwit the Oysters," "Helmut Goes Hunting," "How Short Waves Cut Crime in Hungary," *Short Wave Craft*, June/July 1931.

4. Lecari Interview.

5. Biographic information concerning Ivan Conrad provided by John Fox, FBI historian.

6. Hoover letter to Eskridge, 12/1/41. Courtesy of Leann Lecari.

7. Ernest Porter, "The FBI's Radio Message from Pearl Har-

At 08:25 on that same morning Robert L. Shivers, the Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Honolulu Field Office, was dressing in his bedroom at his quiet suburban home at 4057 Black Point Road, just east of Diamond Head Crater, when Sue Isonaga, the young girl who lived with him and his wife, Corrine, called him to the telephone. Shiver was about to host a breakfast for members of the Emergency Services Committee, a group of community leaders who met regularly to discuss issues of common interest to Hawaiians in the wake of the growing threat from Japan. The caller was his old friend, Captain Bernard Van Kuren, the Honolulu Police Department's Chief of Detectives. Wasting no time with small-talk, Van Kuren offered a sketchy summary of events; Pearl Harbor was under attack, dozens of Japanese planes were bombing and strafing, ships were burning, there were already hundreds of casualties, mainly sailors and Marines. As the stunned Shivers prepared to leave, he instructed Corrine to telephone his staff with orders to immediately report to the office. Then he cautioned her to keep Sue close and ensure her safety.<sup>8</sup>



Dwayne Eskridge

A few minutes later Shivers careened his car through the streets to his Honolulu office a short five miles away. Battleship Row was already in shambles, the *Oklahoma* and *Arizona* were on fire, other ships badly damaged, and an unknown number of sailors and Marines were dead or dying. His drive was a nightmarish mixture of hundreds of Japanese fighter planes whizzing around his car, bombs exploding, buildings erupting in violent flaming tongues, and windows blowing shards of glass shrapnel onto sidewalks on a pristinely beautiful Hawaii morning. Adding to the mad-

ness were dozens of terrified pedestrians scrambling wildly for safety through clouds of dense acrid smoke, jagged craters, amid scattered debris littering the recently spotless streets and, even worse, people dying before Shivers eyes. Civilian carnage was random and unpredictable. John Adams and his father Joe, driving with their friend Joe McCabe, were killed instantly when a bomb hit their car. Eddie Sakai, who lived on North Vineyard Street, was cut slightly on the cheek and chest. On Peleula Street, Yashiro Takai lost both legs while Patrick Chang disappeared when the roof of the Schuman Carriage Company across the street from the territorial governor's office collapsed on him.<sup>9</sup>

Within moments of the attack, a frightened fourteen year-old boy, Dan Inouye, began rendering first aid to dozens of wounded neighbors. Sixty-six years later the events of that morning remained a fresh memory for United States Senator Daniel Inouye. "One shell fell into the dining room," he recalled, "where this old Japanese lady was having breakfast." When Inouye arrived, she was slumped over in her food. "Shrapnel went through her head and killed her. She didn't know what hit her." Fearing a paratroop attack at any moment, the local military authorities ordered the senior class from a local military school to guard the nearby hills, fearing possible sabotage of the water sources that supplied the city of Honolulu. Daniel Akaka, a member of that senior class, later recalled

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bor," *The Investigator*, December 1991, pp. 2-3. 5. "Twentieth Anniversary Attack on Pearl Harbor," *The Investigator*, December 1961, P2; "HAM-Built Circuit Links FBI in Washington, DC, Honolulu," *QST*, December 1991, p. 50. (He would remain on duty for the next sixty hours until he was relieved by Mel Barrett who was sent out to Honolulu on December 8. Eskridge's jumpiness showed itself on Monday when an errant air raid siren sounded and prompted him to send a clear message to Washington, reporting a new attack. For the next ten days Barrett and Eskridge lived in the office rotating six hour shifts. Barrett had no personal residence and on the tenth day Shivers asked him where he was staying and when Barrett told him he had no residence, Shivers ordered him to take some time off and locate personal quarters. He also remembers when he arrived, that the office had started making crude arrangements for blacking out windows by placing paper over the windows. As weeks passed, the glass window panes were actually painted black so that lights inside the office could be illuminated without violating the black-out restrictions that the military governor had imposed following the attack.) Author interview of John Fox, 4/5/12. Author telephone interview of Mel Barrett 9/26/2009.

8. Interview of Sue Isonaga August 10, 2007, "The Hawai'i Nisei Story, Americans of Japanese Ancestry During World War II." Years later Ted Tsukiyama, a young Hawaiian Nissei who fought in combat in the South Pacific, said of Hemenway that he was the "father of the University of Hawaii" and that "more than any other [Hawaii] resident, he is credited with preventing the mass

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evacuation of Japanese from Hawaii after Japan's 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor."

9. "Dead, Injured," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 12/8/41, 1.

that the fear didn't end with the disappearance of the Japanese planes. The terrifying question on everyone's mind was "When are they coming back? Will we be invaded? Will we be occupied?"<sup>10</sup>

The forty-seven year-old FBI boss was a southerner to the core; born and raised in the heart of Jim Crow country at Sycamore, Tennessee, a small, sleepy town in Cheatham County, half way between Clarksville and Nashville. Memories of Ulysses Grant's stunning victory at Fort Donaldson and General Albert Sydney Johnston's humiliating abandonment of Nashville, the first Confederate state capital to fall to Union forces, still ran deep after the passage of more than three decades. Confederate veterans infused Shivers' boyhood with tales of the "cause" and the "disgraceful and shameful catalogue of disasters" heaped on the Old South.<sup>11</sup> After his army induction at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, in February 1918, Shivers was deployed to France where he served in an ordinance detachment until his discharge as a sergeant in June 1919. On November 11, 1918, just hours before the start of the ceasefire ending the war, Corporal Shivers was posted six miles from the French city of Chalmont, the headquarters of the American Expeditionary Force. Only twenty-four years-old, quickly aged by combat and the horrors of battle, the young Tennessean had acquired a unique appreciation for the beauty and tranquility of peace as only a combat soldier could. No one "longed more for the hour when the guns would go silent" he later recalled. In a letter to his mother, he described agony as he and his buddies waited for their moment of deliverance. The "hours were years and the minutes months" he told her while adding the prayer of any combat veteran that the "outcome of the proceedings around this council table rested the lives, peace and security of the entire world."<sup>12</sup>

After the war he returned to Tennessee where he worked for the post office, then as a Special Food Employee investigating violations of the Lever Act, before joining the Bureau of Investigation as a Special Agent on November 3, 1921. During his first ten years of service, his career hit a couple of bumps

which could have easily ended his career. In January 1924 Attorney-General Harry Daugherty abruptly demanded his resignation for "unsatisfactory performance" when allegations reached him that Shivers, a Republican, was distributing political literature criticizing State Committeeman John W. Overall, a Democrat, causing him "great distress and sorrow." Ten months later, Hoover, the Acting Director of the BOI, reinstated Shivers after an investigation found the accusations baseless. Six months later, a Franklin, Tennessee restaurant-owner accused him of drunkenness. Hoover again cleared him when he learned that his accuser's only evidence was Shivers' dinner order, a "can of tomatoes," which had "taught him [the restaurant owner] that men who ate such a concoction were usually getting over a spree."<sup>13</sup>

In 1930 Clint Hager, the U.S. Attorney in Atlanta, Georgia, criticized his "lack of judgment and childish simplicity" for abandoning an undercover role at a Milledgeville, Georgia, mental sanitarium where Shivers was watching a major criminal claiming insanity to avoid prosecution. Hager charged that he had ordered Shivers to remain at the hospital "until relieved or until his assignment was changed, and that his identity should be strictly and tactfully guarded and concealed."<sup>14</sup> Compounding his insubordination was Shivers' use of a local telephone for a reverse-charge call to his BOI Nashville office, in which he refused to offer his name, leading the suspicious operator to discover the BOI operation at the sanitarium. The allegations proved baseless. During the week Shivers spent at the sanitarium he produced a detailed plan of the premises, determined the subject's location, his difficulties gaining access to him and peculiarities of the sanitarium which could be useful in obtaining a room near the subject. The local BOI chief found nothing to "indicate that Agent Shivers had not conducted a profitable investigation and one satisfactory to the United States Attorney." In a stinging rebuke, Assistant Attorney-General Charles P. Sisson warned Hager that he had

...some reason to believe that [Hager had] become prejudiced against one or more agents attached to this Bureau **because of your dislike of the investigation made by the Bureau in connection with your candidacy for reappointment** [Emphasis added]. Whatever your personal opinion in the matter may be, you are advised that the Department is entirely satisfied with

10. "Attack Shook Hawaiians Beyond Pearl Harbor," *The Washington Post*, 12/7/ 2007, 17.

11. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, P.303.

12. Cheatham County Record of Ex-Service Men in the World War, Tennessee State Library and Archives; "French Rejoicing at News of Armistice," No date or newspaper listed, Cheatham County, Tennessee Historical Society. Melvin Purvis letter to Hoover 4/21/34, SPF, Tolson memorandum to Hoover, 4/9/34, Connelley letter to Hoover, 2/9/32, Tamm memorandum to Hoover 7/23/34, SPF.

13. Burns letter to RLS, 1/9/24, J. M. Towler letters to Hoover 8/25/24 and 7/3/25, SPF Number 67-407 obtained from FBI under FOIA. Hereafter referred to as "SPF."

14. Hagar letter to Hugh Clegg, 2/18,/30.

*the way in which this investigation was handled, and why you should take it upon yourself to visit antagonism upon members of the Bureau, I do not quite understand.*<sup>15</sup>

In view of the poisoned atmosphere, Hoover transferred Shivers out of the Nashville Division in 1931 on a journey that would take him to nine different field divisions over the next eight years, ending with his promotion to the rank of Special Agent in Charge of the Honolulu Division in the summer of 1939.<sup>16</sup> Throughout these years Shivers honed his investigative skills, working a wide variety of cases around the country including bankruptcy, complicated anti-trust cases, motor theft, and later fugitive, kidnapping, extortions and bank robberies: all the time developing a reputation for efficient, thorough work and clear and comprehensive report writing. Supervisors routinely described him as a well-informed investigator, diplomatic and engaging in his dealings with people who, in the words of one official, made “contacts readily, and favorably [impressed] all persons with whom he [became] associated.” Earl J. Connelley, Hoover’s close confidant, a man he entrusted with leading the Bureau’s most sensitive investigations, described him as an agent of “considerable investigative skills” possessing “considerable common sense, initiative and force ... who industriously [applied] himself to his work.” Even Edward Tamm, who ran nationwide day to day investigations for Hoover, commended Shivers telephone-tapping skills, remarking that despite his inexperience “he successfully placed this tap in a period of three hours and reported to me the details of a telephonic conversation which transpired upon my telephone.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite his investigative skills impressing everyone, a taciturn personality initially raised questions about his qualifications for promotion into the Bureau’s management ranks. An early and important critic, Harold R. Nathan, one of Hoover’s oldest friends and confidants, applauded his grasp of “procedures and requirements” but found him “too deliberate in speech and action ...rather reticent” contributing to an impression of a lack of “aggressiveness.” Others

characterized him as too quiet, self-possessed, with little to say suggesting that “he would not make a satisfactory executive directing the activities of others.” By 1935, however, FBI Assistant Director Hugh Clegg, who had discouraged his advancement four years earlier, revised his views after meeting him at a retraining session in Washington. He is “not jumpy and snappy in his physical and mental activities [sic] appears to be of sound and deliberate good judgment.” Clegg told Hoover. That same year Shivers was promoted to Acting SAC at the Little Rock, Arkansas, office.<sup>18</sup>

Nine months later he was reassigned to Pittsburgh where he was assessed as “quiet” but “in no way reserved” making necessary changes that put the office operation in “excellent shape.” Local officials lavished praise on him for his response to a natural disaster that went far beyond conventional FBI matters. In 1936 western Pennsylvania experienced significant snow falls followed by a rapid spring thaw and widespread flooding which killed dozens, left one hundred thousand homeless while making roads impassable, stalling transportation, and overwhelming electrical grids and sewer systems which threatened an outbreak of disease. Throughout the crisis, Shivers kept the FBI office open while coordinating emergency response, and continuity of communications with local and state police with federal authorities. Shivers scrounged blankets, food, and clean water for the telephone operators and other staff who remained on duty in the office until the crisis passed.<sup>19</sup>

Repeated transfers and promotions, together with the new pressures of management, soon began affecting his health. Heredity may have also played a role; his father died of diabetes at the age of sixty-six; a brother died of rheumatic heart disease at fifty-five. A medical examination taken in July 1936, the first in his FBI career, revealed significantly elevated blood pressure with a rapid pulse reaching a level of 120. Fearing that “extreme hypertension ... with excitement may cause a fatal accident,” the examining physician cautioned him about the use of firearms with a recommendation that he engage only in “very light” physical exertion. An even more discouraging exam

15. Sisson letter to Hager, 4/15/30, SPF. Herbert M. Heitch, MD Medical Report on Shivers, 7/8/36, J.B. Shiley memorandum to Hoover 12/4/37, SPF.

16. V. W. Hughes memorandum for Hoover 3/11/30, “Under no circumstances should this man be assigned to the Nashville Division.” Hoover handwritten note on H. Nathan memorandum to Hoover 2/20/31, SPF.

17. Connelley memorandum to Tolson 10/10/31, SPF, Harold Nathan memorandum 10/10/32, SPF.

18. Clegg memorandum to Tolson, 3/25/35, Tolson memorandum to Hoover 8/15/35, SPF.

19. “Flood Spreading to Downtown, Report 10 Dead in Johnstown,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 3/16/36, P.1; “Over 60 Believed Dead Here, Water Famine Threatens,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 3/26/36, P.1; “City Asks U.S. for \$10,000,000 Relief Rebuilding Being Rushed,” *Pittsburgh-Gazette*, 3/25/36, P.1; “Crisis Over, Disease Menace Nipped,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 3/29/36, P.1, L.C. Schilder memorandum to Hoover 4/25/36, George Ruch letter to Hoover, 3/24/36, SPF.

eighteen months later showed blood pressure readings of 200/115 together with tachycardia (rapid heart rate). Extraction of his upper and lower teeth was recommended for advanced pyorrhea, an inflammation of the tooth sockets leading to loosening of the teeth.<sup>20</sup>

Shivers reported to the Naval Hospital at Bethesda, Maryland, in May 1938 where doctors again found a blood pressure of 200/130, confirmed the tachycardia, and recommended limited physical exertion and hospitalization where a careful study could determine “any causative factors in his increasing hypertension.”<sup>21</sup> Hoover now faced a serious problem. Shivers was approaching twenty years of service with the FBI. For the last three years he performed admirably as a SAC in three different field offices. Two identical diagnoses of Shivers’ potentially fatal medical condition left the director in no doubt about the difficult decision he now had to make. “I cannot always allow my personal feelings to control my official actions” he told Shivers. Should anything go wrong, he warned, upon such an occasion (arrests, raids), “and it was found that there was some physical disability existent in the person leading the raid, it would be impossible to explain this away to what sometimes is an all to critical public.”<sup>22</sup> Hoover removed Shivers as SAC with a corresponding reduction in salary, sending him first to Miami, Florida, and then to New Orleans as a “Special Agent on General Assignment” handling investigations not “subject to arduous physical duties” such as bankruptcy, insurance fraud and applicant cases.

Medical problems, however, continued to dog him. While in New Orleans, dentists removed his upper and lower teeth replacing them with dental plates. When a follow-up medical exam found his condition unchanged, Hoover suggested that he seek the advice of Shivers’ personal physician, Dr. Herbert Eichert, a Miami internist. Eichert found Shivers’ functional condition “quite satisfactory” suggesting that he “should be able to efficiently perform any work which the Bureau demands of him.” While cautioning that the possibility of a major vascular accident occurring under great stress was ever present in any individual with high blood pressure “there is nothing about [Shivers] condition to indicate an imminent breakdown of the heart or the vessels of the brain.”

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20. Record of Physical Examination of Officers and Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice for Robert L. Shivers, 7/8/36; Hoover letter to RLS, 9/24/36, SPF.

21. Dr. William Earl Clark letter to Hoover, 5/24/38, SPF.

22. Hoover letter to RLS, 5/16/38, SPF.

Eichert then noted further that “it goes without saying that a life of continuous physical stress would not benefit his condition.” Hoping to reinforce Eichert’s encouraging diagnosis, Shiver’s took another physical exam, this time for an insurance company, which then offered him a \$10,000 policy prompting him to ask Hoover to restore him to full duty status.<sup>23</sup>

Weeks later, a new medical test at Bethesda Naval Hospital found Shivers’ resting pulse at 120 with a blood pressure reading of 170/104. When the examining physician expressed concerns about his health and the pressures of leading an FBI office, Shivers assured him that the role of a SAC “was not strenuous.”<sup>24</sup> Following a satisfactory electrocardiogram and evidence of no further progression of his hypertension Hoover restored him to full duty.<sup>25</sup>

Eight days later Hoover returned Shivers to the rank of Special Agent in Charge, a yearly salary increase to \$5000 (\$81000 in 2012) and orders to establish a new field office in Honolulu. His transfer was probably based on his many years of service, his successful experience as a SAC and community leader, and Hoover’s acceptance of Eichert’s opinion that:

*...authorities on the subject of high blood pressure agree that these cases run a more favorable course in a warm climate. Consequently if choice exists it would be better that Mr. Shivers be stationed in a place where such conditions exist.”<sup>26</sup>*

After arriving in Hawaii with his wife Corrine in January 1940, it did not take him long to grasp the magnitude of the task. A white population that was “utterly cold” with little regard for his mission and even less for FBI presence in the territory, forced him to pursue an “extremely cautious and slow” approach, focused on winning the trust of key community leaders who controlled and influenced the local population.

The “suspicion and growing fear of the behavior of the Japanese population” Shivers later recalled, made it “readily apparent” that holding together the “racial groups ... as a united community in a common effort” would permit full prosecution of a war without the need for “maintaining order behind the lines among the civilian populace.”<sup>27</sup>

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23. Dr. Herbert Eichert letter to Hoover, 1/3/39, SPF.

24. Record of Physical Examination of Officers and Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, 1/4/39, SPF.

25. Glavin memorandum to Tolson 7/15/39, SPF.

26. Eichert letter to Hoover 8/12/39, SPF.

27. RLS Affidavit to the Clausen Investigation dated 4/10/1945; Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 1981. 360. Hereafter referred to as *At Dawn We Slept*.



Gun Vault Radio Room

For a Tennessean, who had never met an Asian, he was overwhelmed by his sudden immersion into a complex racial brew of Caucasians, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, native Hawaiians, each with their own culture, history, tradition, and language, coupled with a rigid social and class stratification that dominated the islands. If the white community was indifferent to his presence, then “the orientals” were at best, “most reticent” he later wrote.” The Asian communities neither criticized nor commented favorably saying “nothing to indicate how they felt other than to avoid all contact with [the FBI] office.”<sup>28</sup>

For the new FBI boss, internal security in Hawaii rested on several key questions. Men and women of Japanese background made up thirty eight percent of the local population. If war in the Pacific did break out, where would their loyalty lie? Would they side with the emperor of Japan? What would the threat be to local Japanese from other racial groups? Typical of white attitudes toward Japanese was a magazine article that appeared just six months before the attack describing an evening at Lousy Louie’s, a bar owned and operated by a local Japanese businessman. “Lousy Louie’s is owned by a Jap. He’s a toothy half-pint bowbow mys-

tery, smooth as cream, tightly buttoned, neat as a dove egg, soaped, burnished and pomaded.”<sup>29</sup>

Shivers began by meeting with local white religious, educational, and civic leaders to explain his role, seek their help, and pressure them to arrange introductions for him with local leaders of the diverse racial groups. He soon recruited the help of Charles Hemenway, a Vermonter, born in 1875 to missionary parents. Following graduation from Yale in 1897, Hemenway moved to Hawaii where he taught mathematics and mathematical drawing at the Panhoa School. He became a lawyer, served as the territory’s attorney-general, and for twenty years served on the University of Hawaii’s Board of Regents. Many decades later Hemenway was still remembered as a friend and mentor to hundreds of Japanese-American students at the university’s Manoa campus.

Hemenway introduced Shivers to two very influential local leaders: Shigeo Yoshida, a local Japanese writer and teacher and a thirty-five year-old second generation Chinese named Hung Wai Ching, the head of the Young Men’s Christian Association. Ching and his five brothers and sisters were raised by their mother following their father’s death. Using his own family experience as a teaching tool, Ching educated

28. RLS affidavit to Roberts Commission, *History of the FBI in WW II*.

29. Walter Davenport, *Collier’s*, 6/14/41.

Shivers on the incongruity and the often bewildering racial anagram that faced the chief federal law enforcement officer in the territory. His grandfather had fought for Chinese freedom with Dr. Sun Yat Sen. As a child, his home life was dominated by hatred of the Japanese and his mother's refusal to buy Japanese goods. Yet, from 1924 to 1928, while attending the University of Hawaii, Ching headed the local Boys' Club made up almost completely of Japanese youth. With a civil engineering degree in hand, he attended Union Theological Seminary in New York and earned an advanced degree from the Yale Divinity School in 1932. Following his return to Hawaii, his attitudes toward Japanese matured, and he assumed territorial leadership roles in the Boys Club and the YMCA.<sup>30</sup>

Relying on people like Hemenway, Yoshida, and Ching, as well as "men of non-Japanese ancestry who knew them personally and knew the Japanese community," Shivers established two advisory groups in June 1940 made up mainly of Japanese-American citizens. There was no specific logic to the committees: one was not necessarily superior to another: committees went out of business only to be replaced by others while at the same time subcommittees became part of the larger committee. Meeting at least "once a week" Shivers acquired a thorough and wide ranging knowledge about Hawaii, its history, the rich and colorful role of Japanese, Chinese and others in the cultural and economic development of the Islands.

One of the most important and lasting committees was the Council for Inter-Racial Unity in Hawaii, formed a year before the Pearl Harbor attack, for the promotion of amity among the Asian and Anglo population of Hawaii. As a leading member, Hemenway sponsored Shivers' appointment to the council, which soon created a "Steering Committee" composed of prominent educators, religious leaders, business professionals, together with army and navy officials. Serving as chairman, Shivers held bi-weekly strategy discussions designed to open lines of communication between the civilian, government and military authorities and the local island population. At Shivers'

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30. Interview of Hung Wai Ching, *thefirstbattle.com*. Ted Tsukiya-ma, Hung Wai Ching. [http://javadc.org/hung\\_wai\\_ching.htm](http://javadc.org/hung_wai_ching.htm). Nancy Nott letters to author 4/15/09 and 4/22/09, Hawaii Historical Society; "It was not until I conferred with you that I began to understand the complex racial conditions in Hawaii. You gave me a group of loyal citizens of Japanese ancestry who proved invaluable in helping me shape my course. It is obvious that had Agent Shivers not been the person that he was, no doubt Americans of Japanese ancestry in Hawaii would have met the same basic conditions as occurred to their colleagues and their family members on the mainland." *Congressional Record* February 26, 2003, *Congressional Record-House H-1364* II.

instigation Colonel Kendell Fielder, the head of the local army G-2 office, played a critical role in breaking down suspicions by taking every opportunity for discussions on the importance of adherence to the law, cooperation in emergencies, and assurances of fair treatment. Much of Shivers' time was spent traveling throughout the territory visiting village churches, schools, town halls, and civic associations promoting the importance of loyalty to the nation in time of war. The themes of his informal talks always emphasized "the idea that a united citizenry is essential" to a strong defense, "faith in American way of life and ... the willingness "to protect it" and the uniqueness of Hawaii, its way of life and the need to "preserve it in a way of human relationships."<sup>31</sup>

Shivers was also a member of the Council for Inter-Racial Unity's Emergency Service Committee (ESC). It too was composed of influential leaders from the various racial groups who regularly met to develop strategies for strengthening loyalty to America while facing "realistically and cooperatively the difficult situation" a war would place them in. Unlike the many other committees set up during these pre-war years, the ESC remained in effect throughout the war. Years later, in testimony given before Congress, he described the ESC's wartime contribution to Hawaii as "positively American, its work appreciated by the community, the Army and the FBI, and its contributions toward maintenance of inter-racial unity in Hawaii during the critical years of the war outstanding." It was an ESC meeting that Shivers was about to host on the morning of the attack.<sup>32</sup>

Thirty-five minutes after the Japanese attack, the FBI office was a frenzied scene of bewildered men and women suddenly yanked out of their sleepy Sunday morning doldrums now anxiously trying to cope with the reality of doing business in America's only active and forward war zone. The entire FBI staff was still alive. Telephones rang incessantly. Dozens of dazed and terrified local people were walking in with all sorts of reports. Japanese informants called to request instructions. Shivers' immediate fear was a Japanese amphibious invasion aided by sympathetic local Japanese residents of Hawaii. He ordered his informants to "deploy ... among the Japanese populace to report any information concerning subversive acts, statements, sabotage or espionage."<sup>33</sup> Doing so meant contacting an additional hundred informants within

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31. RLS Affidavit to the Clausen Investigation dated 4/10/1945.

32. *Ibid.*, Ted Coffman, *thefirstbattle.com*.

33. RLS affidavit to Roberts Commission, *History of the FBI in WW II*.

the Japanese community. Shivers ordered Van Kuren to send officers to Nuuanu Avenue, site of the Japanese consulate to report on the movements of anyone entering or exiting the premises.<sup>34</sup> Within an hour he issued new orders for the police to cordon off the building and grounds. When Van Kuren called to report that the consulate staff was burning papers and books, Shivers ordered him to prevent any further destruction, and return all unburned items to his office. Documents recovered from the consulate's Telegram File were then turned over to Captain Irving Mayfield, the U.S. Navy's district intelligence officer, for cryptographic analysis. At midmorning Shivers contacted officials of the Globe Wireless Company and the Mackay Radio and Telegraph Company, demanding copies of encoded cables sent and received by the consulate between 1 December and the day of the attack. These messages were also turned over to Mayfield.

All sorts of wild reports quickly overwhelmed Shivers' staff. Japanese soldiers were spotted parachuting from planes. Japanese spies using flares were signaling ships at sea while saboteurs were spotted poisoning the city's water reservoir at Pacific Heights. Building fires were caused by sabotage. Reports of sampans with Japanese fishermen guiding the attacking planes through hand signals and radios came in along with fears of a large group of menacing Japanese gathered in a local Honolulu park. All of these hysterical, terror induced complaints were investigated and proven wrong. Paratroopers were actually puffs of white smoke from anti-aircraft blasting wildly all over the island. The reservoir saboteurs were local high school seniors sent to guard the water source. The sabotaged buildings were roof fires ignited by falling anti-aircraft shells. The "menacing" crowd was actually five hundred local Japanese residents assembled by the American Red Cross for an awards ceremony honoring their exemplary commitment to community health. Other reports were hilarious bordering on the bizarre. One local woman complained that her dog was a Japanese spy barking in code while another offered her dead canary as evidence that her tap water was poisoned. An autopsy revealed that the starved bird literally blew up and exploded when it was suddenly given water. More frightening complaints dealt with another unexpected nightmare – unex-

ploded ordinance. What to do with them and who was responsible for rendering them safe. When police officials sought guidance, Shivers referred them to army officials.



Robert L. Shivers

Colonel George Bicknell, in command of the local G-2, was a constant presence in Shivers' office. Months earlier, as the emergency deepened, Bicknell had moved his staff of nineteen to an office in the Dillingham Building for closer coordination with the FBI. A special "telephone loop" had been installed linking Shivers' office with Hawaii Department headquarters at Fort Shafter and the ONI at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. At around nine o'clock Shivers finally reached Tamm by telephone at his office at FBI headquarters. The

conversation was short and to the point – the island was still under aerial attack, there was an unknown number of dead and dying, the office was functioning, his staff was safe and on duty. Tamm learned Shivers had ordered the disconnection of the consulate's telephones – no calls were coming in or going out. The consulate and its staff was now isolated. Within a few moments their conversation ended, but the telephone connection was kept open.<sup>35</sup>

Around eleven o'clock the Governor of Hawaii telephoned Shivers. Joseph Poindexter was a seventy-two year-old Oregon-born lawyer, and had served as the district attorney and state attorney in Montana before President Wilson selected him for a federal judgeship in Hawaii in 1917. After six years, he left the bench returning to private practice until 1934 when President Roosevelt appointed him as Hawaii's governor. The governor was in shock. Not only was his territory under foreign attack but that morning he was almost killed when an unexploded anti-aircraft shell landed in his driveway. Months earlier, the territorial legislature had passed the Hawaii Defense Act giving the governor sweeping powers in the event of a major emergency. Confused and bewildered about how to proceed, he also found himself under heavy pressure to turn over civilian government control to the military. A panicked Poindexter turned to Shivers for advice. In Shivers' office at the time of the call was Lieutenant John Burns of the Honolulu Police Department. Shivers motioned him to pick up another telephone receiver so that he could eavesdrop on the

34. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*.

35. Hoover memorandum to the Roberts Commission, "20th Anniversary Attack on Pearl Harbor," *The Investigator*, 12/61, 4.

conversation. Recalling the moment decades later, Burns described the distraught governor as “almost crying” for Shivers’ support for retention of civilian authority over the territory. It was “amazing to me a little bit that the guy that was governor was crying and asking Shivers whether he should go along with the Army, and his deputies had a paper for him to sign, his Attorney-General I mean, had prepared the paper.” Uncertain about how to respond, Shivers equivocated, telling Poindexter that he was not an attorney and as the local head of a federal agency he could not advise him on such a momentous issue. Shivers instead urged him to seek the counsel of the local U.S. Attorney. Thirty minutes later, Poindexter turned over territorial control to the military.<sup>36</sup>

At half past eleven, Shivers called C.H. Carson in Washington with a brief update. His assessment was dismal. The attacks had temporarily subsided. The G-2 and ONI casualty reports were very grim and growing worse by the minute. The population was in shock. Civilian casualties were mounting up fast. The territory was defenseless. Civilian government control of the Hawaiian Island territory had been relinquished to military authorities. The Japanese consulate and staff were now isolated. Its telephone lines had been severed. Calls and walk-ins with all sorts of reports were overwhelming his resources.

At noon, the Honolulu police reported that the Japanese consulate was secure and no-one had been permitted in or out. One officer abruptly confronted a casually-dressed Nago Kita, the Japanese consul-general, as he blithely left the building carrying his golf clubs as if nothing had happened. An outraged Kita disclaimed any knowledge of the attack when a police officer escorted him to his office. Shivers then reinforced his earlier request for complete isolation of the consulate and its staff; the grounds and diplomatic staff. The Honolulu Police Department now held the consulate in virtual protective custody. No one could leave, no visitors could enter and no telephone calls in or out. Kita would prepare lists for food and provisions which the police would purchase at the local grocery store.

His next thoughts turned briefly to Corrine and Sue. Earlier that morning Shivers had arranged for their relocation to a shelter at Manoa because of the danger posed by a large anti-aircraft battery situated

near their home.

Shizeo “Sue” Isonaga, a native of Hawaii, entered Shivers’ life shortly after his arrival in Hawaii when her widowed Japanese mother, then living on Maui, sent her to a school near Honolulu to learn cafeteria management. As the school had no dormitories, students were placed with local families; Sue moved into the Shivers’ home. Many years after the war, Sue Isonaga told an interviewer that at home in the evening Shivers, who had “never met Orientals,” quietly chatted with her about her family, her education, attitudes toward the United States and her feelings toward Japan. For hours she casually explained that she had no connection with Japan, in school she learned reading, writing, American civics, history, obedience, and the “golden rule.” Gradually, they grew close, almost into a family unit (Shivers and his wife had no children) with Sue calling Corrine, “Mom Shivers.” He often joked that he planned to adopt her and call her “our child” and on the many occasions, while traveling throughout the island chain, both Shivers and Corrine visited Maui where they assured Sue’s mother that she was being well cared for. When Sue and Corrine arrived at the shelter on the morning of the attack they found hundreds of women crying at the sight of frantic security officials issuing weapons with orders to “kill any Jap in sight.” After learning of the situation from an agent sent to check on them, Shivers immediately removed them to an even safer place near Nuuanui.<sup>37</sup>

Lieutenant John (“Jack”) Burns was a seven-year veteran of the Honolulu Police Department, who had quickly risen from patrol officer to detective, handling vice and homicide. He was born in 1906 at Fort Assinaboine, Montana, where his father was a soldier in the U.S. Army. At the age of seven Jack moved to Hawaii with the family to join his father who had been assigned to Fort Schafter. His Irish quick-tempered father was a skilled rifleman, and a talented ball player who became abusive when he drank, which was quite often. His frequent gambling shattered the family’s finances when he turned to fraud to pay his gambling debts, a crime that led to dishonorable discharge from the service and his abandonment of the family.

The Burns children were raised by a devoutly Roman Catholic mother. As a kid Jack served as an altar boy, caroused with friends, and took any job he could find from soda-jerk to delivery boy to help support the family. As a troubled teenager he quit school, turned to alcohol, drifted with no direction in life, and after a stint in the army, joined the Honolulu Police

36. At 3:30 PM (Hawaii Time) President Roosevelt signed the order placing the Hawaiian Islands under army jurisdiction for the next three years. *Burns Oral History* January 14, 1975 PP. 24-25. Helen Garacimos Chapin, *Shaping History*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1996, P.171-172.

37. Interview of Shizeo Isonaga, Undated, [thefirstbattle.com](http://thefirstbattle.com).

Department at the age of twenty eight.<sup>38</sup>

Police service expanded his contacts with Hawaii's many racial groups infusing in him a deep compassion that defined his later life. In 1931 he married Beatrice Van Bleeh, a young nurse from California. A year later she contracted polio which left her paralyzed from the neck down and forever confined to a wheelchair. Despite medical warnings that bearing children could risk her life and her baby's, she became pregnant. Jack and Bea, for personal and religious reasons, refused to consider an abortion, turning instead for help to Sachedo Okazaki, a local physician and massage therapist, who rejected these dire predictions and instead pursued regular massage treatment throughout Bea's pregnancy. A healthy James Sachedo Burns was born on 19 April 1937.<sup>39</sup>

Burns entered Shivers' universe in December 1939 when the Honolulu mayor, the Board of Electors and Shivers requested the Honolulu Police Department to open an Espionage Bureau. Its purpose was support for the undermanned FBI office which lacked the requisite language skills and knowledge of the local community. A four-man team of detectives, two of Japanese background, one Hawaiian and one Korean, serving under Burns' supervision, was chosen. Three spoke fluent Japanese; and all had deep roots in the local community. They worked directly for Shivers, who gave Burns a letter containing a name with some descriptive data in a sealed envelope; Burns then assigned the investigation to one of his detectives. After questioning his community sources about the person's background, general activities, reputation and loyalty to the United States, a finished report was prepared for Burns and passed to Shivers for indexing and cataloging.<sup>40</sup>

While certainly stunned by the attack, Burns had known for some time that war was close at hand. A week earlier, during one of his routine visits to the FBI office, a grave looking Shivers had ushered him into his office alone and closed the door. Shivers was overwhelmed with emotion. With "tears in his eyes," yet wasting no words, he cryptically told Burns, without further explanation, that the United States would soon be at war with Japan; an attack could occur somewhere

possibly within a week. This disclosure was for Burns' information only, and was not to be shared with Shivers' staff or his detectives. Burns was to begin gauging the mood of the Japanese community for any hint of an impending Japanese attack. Shivers was desperate to know, in Burns' words, "if it looks like a catastrophe is coming or something's gonna happen or anything like that or are they expecting anything."<sup>41</sup>

At around four o'clock a flash message arrived from Hoover. It contained the order that President Roosevelt had signed, requiring the arrest of all Japanese aliens listed for custodial detention. In the months before the attack, Shivers had prepared a series of lists of Japanese aliens across the Hawaiian Islands scheduled for arrest. His staff prepared three plans which differed depending on the location of the theater of war and the immediate danger to the Hawaiian Islands. The first plan contemplated a major war in the Pacific with the U.S. Fleet focusing on the arrest of Japanese consular agents with no diplomatic immunity, dangerous religious leaders such as Shinto and Buddhist priests, language school operators, merchants, bankers, and other civilians, as well as certain Hawaiian born citizens of Japanese ancestry.<sup>42</sup>

So ill-prepared were Shivers, Bicknell and Burns when the order arrived that they immediately began manually reviewing the index cards containing the names of candidates designated for internment. No scientific or mathematical process was employed in the decision-making, and after a discussion of the name and data on each card, the three men would decide, if two voted for apprehension, than the decision stood.<sup>43</sup>

Forty-eight hours later, 391 Japanese aliens had been arrested by U.S. Army personnel and Shivers' agents. They included Japanese language teachers, business professionals with ties to Japan, Shinto priests, and more than two hundred honorary Japanese consuls throughout the islands. One of the first arrests was a local Japanese couple named Mori. On the afternoon of Saturday, 6 December, worried FBI translators showed Shivers a transcript of a suspicious telephone conversation, recorded three days earlier, between a Japanese newspaper reporter in Tokyo and Mrs. Motokazu Mori, wife of a Honolulu dentist, then under FBI investigation. The reporter acknowledged receipt of Mrs. Mori's recent telegram containing the "essential points" but he still needed her impressions

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38. Author interview of James Burns 4/7/11; Emme Tomimbang, *John A. Burn: The Man & His Times* (Honolulu, Hawaii: 2000 Production, 2000), documentary. Hereafter referred to as *John A. Burns: The Man and his Times*.

39. *John A. Burns: The Man & His Time*.

40. Burns Oral History, 1/14/75. The FBI office consisted of Shivers, ASAC Wayne Murphy, fourteen Special Agents, one radio operator, eight clerical and stenographic personnel and one Japanese translator.

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41. *Ibid.*

42. RLS testimony to Roberts Commission.

43. John Burns Oral History.

of conditions that she was then observing. When asked if “airplanes were still flying daily” she replied that “lots of them fly around.” Next he asked about the Pacific Fleet, the number of sailors in Hawaii, and if Japanese and Caucasians are getting along “harmoniously.” A nervous Mrs. Mori demurred saying that “we try to avoid talking about such matters.” Shivers’ suspicions only deepened when the reporter suddenly began questioning her about the types of flowers currently in bloom in Hawaii. Her equally strange reply was that “presently, the flowers in bloom are fewest out of the whole year. However, the hibiscus and the poinsettia are in bloom now.”<sup>44</sup>

Wasting no time Shivers, showed the transcript to Bicknell who telephoned his superior officer, Colonel Fielder, who was then with Lieutenant-General Walter Short, Commanding General of Hawaii as they were preparing to depart for dinner at Schofield Barracks. When asked if the matter could wait until the following morning, Bicknell insisted that it could not and pushed for an immediate meeting. Within minutes he was discussing the translated message with Fielder and Short at the general’s headquarters. Forty-five minutes later, when a puzzled Short concluded that the message was a “true picture of what was going on in Hawaii at the time,” Bicknell thought to himself that Short’s remarks touched on the nub of the dilemma – “it was too accurate a picture.” As their meeting wore on without resolution, the two senior officers increasingly rationalized the transcript as “everyday affairs in their minds” leading Fielder to charge Bicknell with “perhaps being a bit too intelligence conscious.” Years later, when the circumstances

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44. RLS affidavit to Roberts Commission, *History of the FBI in WW II*; Bicknell affidavit to the Clausen Commission 1945, NOTE: While the Mori’s were later determined to have no significance in espionage the same cannot be said for the conversation between. It is very possible that they may have unwittingly served Japanese purposes. Prange notes that the Japanese Naval Intelligence had consistently monitored the telephone system between Tokyo and Honolulu since their war games in September 1941. They believed that if the United States believed that war was imminent than they would cut the connection and establish a state of emergency in Hawaii. Tachibana, when interviewed years later, stated that Tokyo utilized the radiotelephone system between Honolulu and Tokyo using completely commercial conversation and employing key words to assess the state of readiness in Hawaii. He went on to say that this channel was used on December 5 to determine U.S. Pacific fleet status and on December 7 “that Hawaii was quiet as usual with usual shore leave of sailors and no blackout at all.” Ogawa also told Prange that such a check was made on December 7 at 1500 Tokyo time or 1900 December 6 in Oahu “just about the time Bicknell was driving up to Fielder’s home.” Prange wrote that Ogawa personally advised Nagumo and Ito within the hour that everything was normal in Honolulu – a message that “pleased and greatly relieved” both officers. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, 478-479.

of the transcript became public, Fielder confessed that in the end both he and Short “were unable to attach any military significance to it.”<sup>45</sup>

Typical of the Japanese arrested was sixty-one year old Matsujiro Otani, a long time Honolulu resident, and president of Matsujiro Otani Limited, a local fish marketing firm. Born on Okekarru, a tiny island about five hundred miles from Japan, said to be inhabited by no more than five hundred – mostly Christian – inhabitants, Otani emigrated to Hawaii at the age of seventeen where he soon found work in the many fruit and vegetable markets servicing the local Japanese population. His marriage in 1912 to Kano Yanagihara, born in Hawaii to Japanese parents, produced nine children. Starting as a retail fish merchant in a small rented stall, Otani eventually came to dominate the retail fish industry in Hawaii.<sup>46</sup> FBI suspicion about Otani intensified when he was linked to Japanese sampan fishing fleets thought to have been serving as the Imperial Japanese Navy’s eyes and ears in Hawaiian waters. FBI informants described Otani as a virtual “dictator” of the local sampan fleets, which he had financed, thereby making the fishermen obligated to him. He also exercised control over other local fish suppliers, making him the largest importer of tuna and swordfish from Japan and the US mainland.

In March 1939 he purchased the lease for the Asia Market which he renovated over the next two years into thirty-five stalls which he rented to vendors, selling all varieties of food. With unfortunate timing, he scheduled his grand opening for Friday, December 5, 1941. Saturday was set aside for the general public to visit, with eleven o’clock on Sunday, December 7, scheduled for a special party for the many tenant vendors and their families.<sup>47</sup> The party never took place and Otani was arrested and placed in detention.

As darkness descended, Shivers issued the following orders: all public and private lighting was to remain off; all civilians were to remain inside their homes until the situation returned to normal; only emergency vehicles were permitted on the streets, all public gatherings were cancelled until further notice, and strict security was imposed on vital installations, including the docks, power plants and reservoirs.

The black-out was so terrifying, according to one survivor “that even a dog wasn’t safe on the streets.” The order was “don’t move at night.” Anyone or anything that did venture out, someone later recalled,

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45. Ibid.

46. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, 477.

47. Ibid.

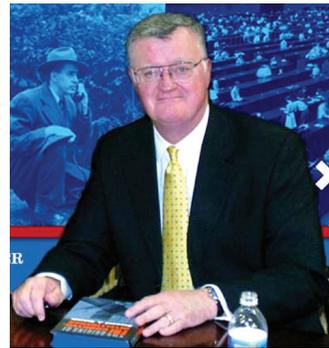
would be shot. Imaginations ran riot. One person saw a spy near Fort Schafter signaling “as if a flashlight was being flashed on and off in rhythm.” The spy turned out to be an old Japanese farmer trying to milk his cow while carrying a blue cellophane wrapped lantern, in compliance with the blackout regulation permitting only blue light. The rhythmic signaling resulted from the gentle swaying of palm fronds. Terrified young army reservists manning anti-aircraft batteries only added to the night time horrors. One unnerved crew fired wildly into the night sky when they heard a sentry yell “Halt!” while others fired at passing cars and trucks. When a searchlight battery overlooking the town of Kaneohe unexpectedly beamed a light into the sky, it too became a target. Within minutes the shooting stopped, with no one hurt, but already stretched nerves close to the breaking point.<sup>48</sup>

That day the Hawaiian Islands became America’s first war zone. For months afterwards the FBI staff, like the rest of the local population, went nervously about their daily existence amid life’s new realities, anti-aircraft guns, miles of barbed wire strung along tranquil beaches, sandbags stacked next to buildings and pillbox emplacements. Lights were thought likely to aid an enemy so nightly black-outs became commonplace and gasmasks became a part of everyday apparel. Constant reminders of the possibility of an imminent invasion.

Shivers’ later recalled how he had pondered his future, and that of his wife, Corrine, Sue, and his colleagues, aware of the certainty of his own death if captured by the Japanese. For a man who had assured his doctor just two years earlier that a SAC’s work day was one of dull routine and little stress, he now found himself in a hellish world turned upside down. Within weeks of the attack he directed that in the event of an “attack on the Island of Oaha,” all FBI codes, ciphers and confidential files would be destroyed while

48. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*. 567-568.

making the necessary contingency plans “in the event of the death or injury of those in charge.”<sup>49</sup> Certainly, Shivers’ life had changed forever. 



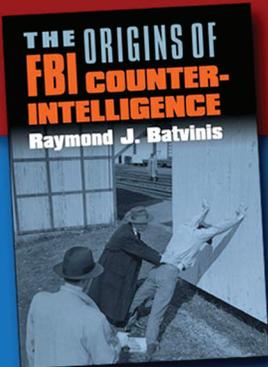
Raymond Batvinis served as an FBI agent for twenty five years and holds a doctorate from The Catholic University of America. He currently teaches at The George Washington University and is the chairman of the history committee of the Society of Former

Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. His second book entitled *Hoover’s War*, a study of FBI operations during the Second World War, is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2013. All photographs used were provided, and are the property of, the author.

Readers may be interested to know that Shivers is a hero in Hawaii today for his herculean efforts in saving so many Japanese from internment. Of the 140,000 Japanese in the Hawaiian Islands, less than a thousand were interned thanks directly to Shivers and Emmons in contrast to what happened on the mainland. He and Emmons fought the power establishment in Washington by vigorously defending the Japanese-Hawaiians as loyal to the United States and who would take up arms against America’s enemies. In 1943 he was forced to leave the FBI for medical reasons. The Chinese man referred to in this article met Eleanor Roosevelt at the White House soon after, and after telling her about Shivers’ contributions, she wrote one of her famous notes to FDR who immediately appointed him Collector of Customs for Hawaii. In 1950, shortly before his death, the Republican Party of Hawaii was considering nominating him for governor and at the same time he had the honor of walking his beloved “daughter,” Sue, down the aisle to meet her betrothed at the altar while Corrine looked on from the front pew.

Eskridge later became an FBI agent assigned to San Francisco where, among his many cases, he served as the field office liaison with the Hearst family following Patricia Hearst’s kidnapping.

49. Hoover letter to RLS, 3/4/42, SPF; Hoover suggested that in light of the dangerous and uncertain conditions in Hawaii “a determination of procedure is best left to your judgment and knowledge of the local conditions.” Hoover letter to Shivers, 4/24/42, SPF.



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