

JAPAN FOCUSES WORLD GAZE ON 'UNSUNG TOILERS' BY DECORATING QUIET AMERICAN WOMAN TYPIST

Land of Rising Sun Singles Out Mrs. Lillian Wenz, Who for 17 Years Has Been Stenographer at Embassy in Washington

IS FIRST NATION TO SHOW APPRECIATION FOR SIMPLE LABOR DONE DURING PEACE

Value of Usually Submerged Cogs in Great Machine Is Stressed—Wrote Speeches for Envoys to Arms Parley

AFTER entering virtually all other fields of masculine endeavor women are now coming into their own in the field of foreign decorations.

Few, indeed, are the men who give such distinguished service during peacetime that foreign nations feel called upon to honor them by special awards. But for a woman to receive such an award is unprecedented.

For royalty, presidents of republics, statesmen, soldiers and diplomats it is always more or less open season for foreign decorations.

For ordinary clerical workers, hidden away in the vast machinery of governmental offices, however, it is not.

And for that reason official Washington, the center of the Nation's bureaucracy, sat up and gasped a week or so ago when it was officially announced that Mrs. Lillian Wenz, American citizen, stenographer, had been awarded the Japanese Imperial Order of the Sacred Treasure.

Who is Mrs. Wenz?

Official Washington knew little of her despite her seventeen years of faithful service as an employe at the Japanese Embassy. In fact, it knew her better as one of the vast number of quiet, efficient workers who toiled endlessly through the Arms Conference.

Kingdom of Rising Sun Pays Honor to Fair Sex

Far more significance than the American public has had cause to realize is attached to the Imperial Japanese award, because Japan is one of the few nations that have a special award for women.

In most countries the same type of decoration does for both men and women. The incident was all the more notable because the object of this honor was a foreigner to Japan and because her performance was neither spectacular nor heroic.

Even during the war foreign decorations were rare and strictly of a military character, especially authorized by Congress to be received as provided by the Constitution. Though rare, considered in respect to total numbers engaged, they were many compared to what this country had known before.

While military men were the ones chiefly rewarded, some of the officials visiting Europe after the war, and some of those who during the war organized the forces and munitions in America, were singled out for tokens of esteem.

Many remember how former Secretary of the Navy Daniels dodged the British officials who were seeking to express through a decoration upon him their appreciation of the work of the American Navy.

Foreign royal decorations have never been publicly popular in the United States. When our forefathers launched the new order of things they decided that the country would be better off if regal splendor were left behind for all time.

Section 9 of Article I of the Constitution says:

"No title of nobility shall be granted by the United States; and no person holding any office of profit or trust under them shall, without the consent of Congress, accept of any present, emolument, office or title of any kind whatever from any king, prince or foreign state."

A rigid observance of this mandate explains the absence of marks of royal patronage. On a very few occasions, before the World War, Americans have been recognized by princely tokens from abroad. They have always been men of note, however; men who had distinguished themselves as officers in the public service or as private citizens who, through invention or discovery, have planted the standards of civilization far ahead of the main advance of the people.

Gifts Usually Were Given to Smithsonian Institution

Officials who have received gifts or decorations by consent of Congress usually have turned them over to the public, treating them as having been presented to the people instead of their individual representatives personally. Thus will be found medals, jewels, medals and badges of sundry descriptions in the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum and other public places.

At the Institute, for instance, may be found a token of the esteem of the Japanese Government to Commander Perry, who, in 1854, opened the Orient to the New World.

Among public collections are the souvenirs of awards and medals re-



Mrs. Lillian Wenz, decorated by Japan



Eva Booth, given D. S. M. for war work



Madame Curie, discoverer of radium, honored by French Government after years of disregard for her achievements



Major Julia Stimson, head of army nurses, commissioned and given medal for her war work



Grace D. Banker, chief telephone operator for A. E. F., who was awarded D. S. M.



Mrs. James S. Cushman, given D. S. M. for her war activities



Miss Hannah Patterson, another woman decorated by U. S.

Official Washington Sits Up and Gasps When It Is Announced That Woman Had Been Awarded the Japanese Imperial Order of the Sacred Treasure

HONOR TO MRS. WENZ ALL MORE NOTABLE BECAUSE SHE IS A FOREIGNER TO JAPAN

"Mine Is Just a Modest Place, and I Cannot Talk About My Work," Explains Stenographer Diplomatically; Perhaps That Touch Impressed Peace Delegates

"I can't read or talk the language," Mrs. Wenz said. "I can count in Japanese. That is about all."

This action of the Japanese Government toward one of its employes is so unusual that it is causing Congressmen and other officials at Washington to think. It has emphasized that Uncle Sam's Government does little enough toward recognizing long and distinguished service of its employes.

been in the service fifteen years to receive an annuity upon retirement, and then it is 30 per cent of the average annual salary for ten years. The other grades range to those who have served thirty years or more. But the Government confers no special mark of distinction.

During the World War and since, Uncle Sam has decorated but thirteen women of this country for the part they played in it. It is said that some twenty women foreigners have been decorated. None was for service of the typist-sten-

the part she played with the Salvation Army at the front.

"The contribution of the Salvation Army toward winning the war is conspicuous," her citation reads, "and the results obtained were due in marked degree to the great executive ability of its commander."

Dr. Anna Shaw Given Medal for War Work

The late Dr. Anna Howard Shaw was awarded the medal for meritorious and conspicuous services as chairman of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense.

"She co-ordinated the mobilization and organization of women throughout the country," it is stated, "in every phase of war work, including the securing of women for some of the various branches of the army."

Then there is the case of Mrs. James S. Cushman, 600 Lexington avenue, New York, "for exceptionally meritorious and conspicuous service as chairman of the War Work Council of the Y. W. C. A."

In the work of the Red Cross the D. S. M. was awarded to Miss Julia Stimson, of New York, for exceptional devotion to duty while she was chief nurse of the American Red Cross in France.



Her work has been such as would naturally draw her into an intimate knowledge with Japanese affairs, and in particular their relation to America. It has been in this knowledge that she has been of greatest usefulness to the diplomats who have come here to take up with the United States weighty problems of immigration, commerce and disarmament.

Is a Real Diplomat in Discussing Work

"Mine is just a modest place, and I cannot talk about my work," she explained diplomatically when requested to tell something of the last seventeen years.

Perhaps it was that touch of diplomacy that impressed itself upon the grizzled diplomats who came to Washington for the Arms Conference.

and distinction she has just received would require a thorough familiarity with the language of Nippon.

The contrary is true—that she doesn't know a thing about the Japanese language, unless it be a few words she has picked up here and there. To carry on a conversation in Japanese would be about as hard for her as for any other citizen of the United States if one is to take her word for it.

"It was the bigness of the Japanese Government," continued Mrs. Wenz, "that made it possible. It is so big and I am so small that there is really nothing for me to say."

Mrs. Wenz is a native of Washington and received her schooling in this country. One would suppose that to hold the place of confidence

nographer character, such as rendered by Mrs. Wenz.

The nearest approach to it was the award of a Distinguished Service Medal to Grace D. Banker, Signal Corps, of 227 Van Houten avenue, Passaic, N. J. She had charge of the telephone system of the American Expeditionary Force in France. Her citation records this:

"By untiring devotion to her exacting duties under trying conditions she did much to assure the success of the telephone service during the operations of the first army against the St. Mihiel salient and to the north of Verdun."

On May 23, 1919, with a number of officers of high rank, Miss Banker stood in line at the headquarters of the First Army in the German city of Coblenz and received from Lieutenant General Hunter E. Liggett, commander of the First Army, her Distinguished Service Medal. The award was made after more than a year of overseas service as chief operator of the immense telephone system constructed by American hands for the sole use of the American Expeditionary Force.

The same medal was conferred on Commandant Evangeline C. Booth, for

and to Miss Mary Vail Andress, 1072 Park place, Brooklyn, for organizing Red Cross work at Toul, France.

The Distinguished Service Medal for similar reasons was given to Miss Edna M. Coughlin, Miss Dora E. Thompson, Miss Jane A. Delano, Miss Maud Cleveland and Miss Hannah J. Patterson, ten in all.

The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to three members of the army nurse corps: Miss Helen G. McClelland, Miss Beatrice MacDonald and Miss Isabella Stanbaugh, for "bravery in action."

Congress has never authorized any medal or decoration distinctly for women. Those authorized for men have been conferred on both Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan and some other countries all have orders especially for women.

Women of the country will appreciate the recognition of Japan to Mrs. Wenz, in the belief of Alice Paul, head of the National Woman's Party.

"I think it was perfectly splendid," was her comment.

Senator Sheppard, of Texas, believes the action of the Japanese Government may suggest something to Americans with regard to affording recognition for distinguished or loyal service.

"It would be well," he said, "to look into the question as to whether some method may not be found of according recognition for distinguished service in the United States Civil Service."