



OPINION

Offbeat Oregon History

The case of Charity Lamb, Oregon's most misunderstood ax-murderess

BY FINN J.D. JOHN
For the Sentinel

For many years, the case of Charity Lamb was looked at like a crime-fiction yarn from a pulp magazine like *Spicy Detective*. It seemed to have it all: illicit sex, a mother-daughter love triangle, conspiracy — and, of course, a brutal ax murder committed by a woman with the most ironically innocuous name imaginable.

"Charity Lamb and her 17-year-old daughter shared a passion for a drifter named Collins," pop-historian Malcolm Clark Jr. explains breezily, in his 1981 book *Eden Seekers*. "When (Nathaniel) Lamb, as outraged father and cuckolded husband, strongly protested, Charity cut off his objections with an ax."

The real story, of course, is not only more nuanced, but, well, totally different. In actual fact, the only part of Clark's account that's historically supportable is the names of the involved parties, the words "strongly protested," and the word "ax." Its original source appears to have been a newspaper article in the *Oregon Weekly Times* headlined "Revolted Murder," the only sources of which were a neighbor and a bitter interview with the dying Mr. Lamb.

The true story of the Charity Lamb murder will never really be known. But here, as closely as I can pick it out, is the story of how she became Oregon's first-ever convicted murderess:

Nathaniel and Charity Lamb journeyed out to Clackamas County on the Oregon Trail in 1852 and staked a land claim about 10 miles up the Clackamas River from Oregon City. There were few friendly faces in their new home, especially for Charity; they had left all her close friends and relatives behind when they left.

The Lambs had five children, ranging in age from a newborn baby to a 19-year-old daughter. They also had, according to the testimony of their children, a very stormy relationship. The winter after they arrived, Nathaniel knocked Charity down with a punch and kicked her several times for not helping him carry a log. The summer after they arrived on the Oregon Trail, he threw a hammer at her and it clipped her on the forehead, cutting a big gash. He once held her at gunpoint when she was

trying to leave.

By the late spring of 1854, things had gotten worse. In part, that was because of the mysterious Mr. Collins. Mary Ann, the 19-year-old daughter, was much smitten with Collins, who had stayed with the family earlier in the season before moving on to California. He apparently quite liked Mary Ann, too, but Nathaniel wouldn't hear of the match and had forbidden her to communicate with him. So Charity helped Mary Ann write him a letter — and then Nathaniel caught Mary Ann with the letter.

This letter brought things to a head. The children testified that Nathaniel was scolding and shouting at Charity all week. And a sinister new element now entered the abuse: death threats.

"He said she had better not run off," 13-year-old Abram Lamb testified in her trial, "for if she went when he was away he would follow her, and settle her when she didn't know it. I heard her say that morning, before I went out with Pap hunting, that he was going to kill her, and she didn't know what to do."

By "that morning," Abram was referring to the fateful morning which was to end in bloody murder. On that morning, as Nathaniel was setting out on a bear hunt with Abram and a neighbor, Nathaniel stopped at the end of the yard as he walked away from the house. Apparently thinking no one but Charity was watching, he turned, set his rifle down on the railing to steady it, and carefully drew a bead on his wife.

"I was in the house and saw it," nine-year-old Thomas Lamb testified. "When Mary Ann rose up and saw it, he turned away the gun and shot it off at a big tree."

It seems likely that Nathaniel didn't intend to actually kill his wife, even if he wanted to. Theirs was a large family, including a nursing baby who would be very hard to keep alive without his mother. But by the time he returned from his hunting trip, having bagged a bear, she appears to have been utterly convinced that he did — and she (and, probably, Mary Ann) had formulated a desperate plan to ensure her survival: Murder.

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Joe Kelly
HEARTBEAT.COM

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US IS PLAIN TO SEE; I'M TWEEDLE DUM AND HE'S TWEEDLE DEE!



Holiday prep should include fire safety

With the holiday season in full swing, State Fire Marshal Jim Walker urges citizens to remember fire prevention when decorating and entertaining.

From 2010 through 2014, there were 2,899 residential fires in Oregon during the holiday period from Nov. 22 through Jan. 15. These fires resulted in nine deaths, 154 injuries, and more than \$54.8 million in property loss.

"This season is a busy and exciting time of year, but don't let that distract you from keeping your family and friends safe from fire," says Walker. "By following a few important prevention tips for Christmas trees, decorations, and candles, you can help ensure your holidays remain happy."

Tree care and decorating tips:

Choose a fresh, healthy tree with a deep-green color and flexible needles.

When you get the tree home, cut off the bottom two inches of the trunk. This creates a fresh, raw cut for the tree to soak up water.

Water your tree daily. A tree may consume between

a quart and a gallon of water per day.

Place the tree at least three feet away from any heat source such as a fireplace, woodstove, space heater, heating vent, baseboard heater, or radiator.

Use only noncombustible or flame resistant materials to trim a tree.

Always unplug tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

If using a woodstove or fireplace, keep it screened at all times. Keep ribbons, boughs, and other decorative materials at least three feet away.

After the holiday season or whenever your tree dries out, promptly dispose of it and other dry greenery. Burning a tree in a stove or fireplace is extremely dangerous; proper disposal includes recycling or pick-up by a disposal service.

Never burn wrapping paper in the fireplace or wood stove. Wrapping paper burns at higher temperatures than wood and can cause a chimney fire.

Electrical safety

Maintain your holiday lights. Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, and broken or

cracked sockets.

Do not overload electrical sockets. Do not link more than three light strands, unless the manufacturer's directions indicate it is safe.

Protect electrical cords from damage. To avoid shock or fire hazards, cords should never be pinched by furniture, placed under rugs, located near heat sources or attached by nails or staples.

Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations used outdoors are marked for outdoor use.

Candle safety

Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which can look and smell like real candles.

Never leave a burning candle unattended. Extinguish candles when you go to bed, leave a room, or before leaving the house.

Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn. Keep candles at least one foot from combustibles including clothing, curtains, upholstered furniture, greenery, and decorations.

Always use a sturdy non-combustible (metal, glass, or ceramic) candleholder. If a sturdy non-combustible

candleholder is not available, the candle can be placed on a non-combustible plate.

Place candles out of reach of small children and pets.

Avoid candles with items embedded in them such as twigs, flowers, or leaves. These items can ignite or even explode.

Always use a flashlight -- not a candle -- for emergency lighting.

General fire safety

Keep combustibles at least three feet from heat sources.

For increased protection, have working smoke alarms on every level of your home (including the basement), in each bedroom, and in the hallway outside each bedroom.

Make a home fire escape plan and practice it with your family and any overnight guests.

Keep escape routes clear of clutter so you can escape quickly in case of fire.

For more information on fire safety visit: http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/pages/com_ed_section.aspx

Protein for weight loss?

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD
For the Sentinel

We are all taught that protein is a super nutrient that will make us lean,



strong and healthy. We do need protein, but more is not necessarily better, and high-protein foods are not always healthful.

In every cell in the human body, the DNA contains a code that tells the cell which proteins to make. Proteins have a lot of different roles in the body; some provide structure like collagen, some facilitate contact or move-

ment, and others act as enzymes, signals, receptors, or transporters. In order to make all of these proteins, we have to consume protein and break it down into its constituent amino acids.

High-protein foods do tend to be low in glycemic load. This is what the high-protein, low-carb diets get right. They avoid dangerous high-glycemic refined carbohydrates—sugar, white rice and white flour products. In the process, they also limit dangerous trans fats. It is important to remember though, just like excess carbohydrate and fat calories, if you take in more protein calories than your body can use right away, those calories get stored as fat.

Refined carbohydrates are empty calories that are absorbed quickly, and they lead to overeating. Foods that are higher in protein, fiber, and/or resistant starch provide the satiety factor that is missing in refined carbohydrates and help to prevent blood glucose spikes, so we are not driven to overeat. High protein diets can be successful for

weight loss in the short-term, but because they are so focused on animal foods, they are dangerous in the long-term. Low-carbohydrate/high-protein diets have been linked to increased risk of heart disease, cancer and premature death.

Although plant protein is often described as "incomplete," it has been known for many years that all plant foods contain all of the amino acids. Different plant foods may be low in a certain essential amino acid, but as long as you are eating a variety of plant foods and taking in an adequate number of calories, you will get adequate amounts—but not too much—of all the essential amino acids.

Animal protein and plant protein both provide us with adequate amounts of all of the amino acids, but animal protein is more concentrated in the essential amino acids, and for this reason animal protein increases the body's production of a hormone called IGF-1, which is associated with aging and an increased risk of several different

cancers. One interesting study followed over 85,000 women and 44,000 men for more than 20 years, (26 years in women and 20 years in men) recording over 12,500 deaths. This research team found animal protein-rich diets were associated with a 23 percent increased risk of death from cardiovascular disease and cancer, whereas plant protein-rich diets were associated with a 20 percent decreased risk. In addition to animal protein, a diet high in animal products delivers additional harmful, pro-inflammatory or pro-oxidant substances. Animal foods are higher in arachidonic acid, saturated fat, carnitine and choline, heme iron, substances linked to disease pathologies, which should be minimized for good health.

The number of grams of protein humans need in a day has been estimated at .8g/kg/day (about 36 grams of protein per 100 pounds of body weight). However, it is not important to count the number of grams of protein in the food you eat to make sure you reach this num-

ber. If you are eating adequate calories and a variety of foods, it is almost impossible to consume too little protein. For a typical day, a Nutritarian menu of 1700-1800 calories provides approximately 60-70 grams of protein. The point is that when you eat an anti-cancer diet to promote longevity, you strive to consume more colorful plants, reducing animal protein considerably. It is both these features that lead to the dramatic disease-protective lifespan benefits. Eat a high-nutrient (Nutritarian) diet, and forget about protein, you will automatically get the right amount.

Dr. Fuhrman is a #1 New York Times best-selling author and a family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine. Visit his informative website at DrFuhrman.com. Submit your questions and comments about this column directly to newsquestions@drfuhrman.com. The full reference list for this article can be found at DrFuhrman.com.

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