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Episode 212: The Fasting Cure
Air Date: March 24, 2023

PHOEBE JUDGE: This episode contains descriptions of disordered eating and weight loss. Please use discretion.

GREGG OLSEN: These two women in their mid-thirties had been raised, really, in quite wealthy circumstances, in the UK. They had money, they had diamonds, they had landholdings in Australia, and they had a place in London.

PHOEBE JUDGE: In 1910, sisters Claire and Dorothea Williamson took a steamer across the Atlantic. They didn't tell anyone why they were going to America.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

GREGG OLSEN: There weren't any other siblings. Neither had married. And they embarked along this trek across the world, really. They had 13 trunks of stuff with them on this world tour they were on.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Their parents had died young. The sisters had inherited a lot of money-- more than \$1,000,000. Dorothea, who went by Dora, was four years older than Claire. When the Williamson sisters arrived in Canada, they went to Quebec first, then headed west, towards Vancouver.

What were they seeking? Does it seem like they didn't even know what they wanted?

GREGG OLSEN: They were seeking perfect health.

There definitely was a faddist kind of movement going on in America-- in other countries, too-- where people were really seeking alternative treatments but they were mixing it with sort of a holiday aspect, like a little vacation or retreat. So these sanitariums sprang up all over. And some of them offered electroshock kind of therapy and water, some offered regimens of different kinds of foods. Kellogg was known in Michigan for his cereals that he was pushing, as a way to change the way people ate and what their diets were.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Dr. John Harvey Kellogg had invented Corn Flakes. His sanitarium was advertised as "the largest and most elaborately equipped health resort in the world -- a Mecca for vacationists." Kellogg was known to wear a white suit and carry a white cockatoo on his shoulder. He instructed his patients to do things like chew each bite of food 40 times before swallowing, or sit in wooden cabinets lined with light bulbs. It's been reported that Dr. Kellogg also believed an electric current applied directly to the eyeballs could treat vision disorders.

Here's author Gregg Olsen.

GREGG OLSEN: Everybody was kind of looking for something new, something that would make them feel better, maybe take more control of their lives. But what they were doing was turning it over to-- to people, some of them charlatans, some of them that did not know and were not able to cure anybody.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

PHOEBE JUDGE: People flocked to the West for exposure to fresh mountain air. Some western cities had dozens of sanitariums. And when their beds filled up, patients pitched tents and slept in the open desert.

When Claire and Dora Williamson checked into a hotel in Victoria, British Columbia, called The Empress, they saw an ad in a daily newspaper by a doctor named Linda Hazzard.

GREGG OLSEN: She was a self-professed fasting expert. Now, we don't know whether or not she had any training in the subject because, unfortunately, when she was asked to produce her medical records, the place that she had gone to school, purportedly, had burned down. But she was a strong woman, a woman who really had this revolutionary idea, this idea that whatever ails you can be fixed. She felt that through a regimen of fasting and a kind of very rough massage, those two things taken together would eliminate all the toxins, all the reasons why you weren't feeling well, or whatever your ailment was-- from hair loss to maybe even a curved spine or something. She felt all of those things could be fixed with this kind of a treatment.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Linda Hazzard had written a book called *Fasting for the Cure of Disease*. And after reading the ad in the paper, Claire and Dora requested a copy of the book and read it together. Linda Hazzard wrote that, "whatever the manifestation, the only disease is impure blood, and its sole cause impaired digestion. Overeating is the vice of the whole human race." Inside the book, Claire and Dora found a brochure for a sanitarium run by Dr. Hazzard. It was on a peninsula, across the Puget Sound from Seattle, in a village called Olalla. Claire wrote to Dr. Hazzard.

GREGG OLSEN: Claire, she was the leader. She was the one who really led the idea that this was going to be something they would do wholeheartedly. And Dora went along with it. Dora wasn't exactly as smitten with the idea of getting the treatment from Dr. Hazzard, but she did absolutely love the idea of being out in the country. However, when they started corresponding with the doctor, they found out that the Olalla sanitarium hadn't yet been constructed, and that they would need to come, if they wanted to, an apartment that she had set up in downtown Seattle.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

PHOEBE JUDGE: The women agreed Claire and Dora didn't tell their family about their plans, writing in a letter to Dr. Hazzard, "we are not mentioning it to anyone." When they finally met with Dr. Hazzard in person, she told them they didn't have a moment to lose.

GREGG OLSEN: She said, look, we need to get you under treatment right away. You are on death's door. This kind of shocked and surprised the sisters. They didn't really seem to be sick. But Dr. Hazzard said, you are and I know best. And that's really where it all began for them

PHOEBE JUDGE: I'm Phoebe Judge. This is *Criminal*.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

When Claire and Dora Williamson arrived in Seattle, Dr. Linda Hazzard did not examine them. She told them there was no need. Their bodies were full of poison, she said, and she immediately began the sisters on her fasting cure.

GREGG OLSEN: They would get, multiple times a day, a liquid of some kind. It could be orange juice in the morning, maybe five ounces. Later in the day, they would have a tomato broth or maybe it would be a heated broth made of asparagus. And when I say a broth, that really oversells what it is. What we're looking at here is basically a tomato dipped in hot water for, like, two seconds. It was not-- when you're thinking of tomato broth, you might be imagining the old grilled cheese sandwich and the tomato soup combination. But it wasn't that. It was a clear liquid, just barely pink.

PHOEBE JUDGE: And that's it.

GREGG OLSEN: That's it.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Between meals, Dr. Hazzard administered the other parts of her treatment.

GREGG OLSEN: She would just-- I don't know, she did this kind of a pummeling massage that was brutal. And she would lay them down and push really hard, almost like beating them. And the women would just lay there and gasp and writhe in pain. And then she would go on to the next treatment, which was the enema, or as Doctor called it, the internal bath.

PHOEBE JUDGE: And what would that consist of?

GREGG OLSEN: That was probably like anybody's worst nightmare, I'm sure. Hers would last up to eight hours, where the woman would be hooked up to that enema tube, cleansing for that long of a time. And that is exhausting and, I think, horrific. But that was part of the treatment is like, you have to clean the outside and the inside.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

PHOEBE JUDGE: How long does it take for the women to start feeling the effects?

GREGG OLSEN: I think after about a week, they both started feeling weaker and weaker, and wondering about what was happening to them, and were they going to get better or not? And Dr. Hazzard kept assuring them. Each day, she would say, "tomorrow, you'll have perfect health."

PHOEBE JUDGE: She claimed to have cured people of cancer, tuberculosis, epilepsy, and insanity. She told Dora and Claire about her former patients. Once, a 28-year-old woman with depression came to her from Sweden. Dr. Hazzard put her on a liquid diet with daily enemas. Two weeks in, the woman started feeling better. That day, she walked four miles, round trip, to Linda Hazzard's home for her enema. Each day after that, she would again walk four miles or more. After fasting for 42 days, the woman completed her treatment and returned to Sweden. Dr. Hazzard said she received a final letter from her, "a most interesting letter that shows in every way that she is sane, and rational, and happy."

Linda Hazzard had a commanding voice. She had a pet Cocker Spaniel and wore a fox stole that was the same color as the dog. Claire and Dora believed in her, and believed that they could turn a corner any day.

GREGG OLSEN: She knows she's got a couple of live ones, there. She's got some people who have money. I mean, these were not poor, destitute women. They were actually a good mark for somebody who wanted to take advantage of them.

PHOEBE JUDGE: So they're in this apartment in Seattle. Is anyone seeing them? Is Linda Hazzard living with them? Is she just showing up to do the treatments?

GREGG OLSEN: Linda comes and goes, and checks on the women as they are under her treatment. But at the same time, she also had a nurse or two, on staff, that was advised to watch them and see how they were doing.

PHOEBE JUDGE: One of the nurses confided in the neighborhood grocer, quote, "they would not take a glass of water unless Dr. Hazzard said so. You would think she had hypnotized them."

GREGG OLSEN: She could see that they were fading, that these two women were getting weaker and weaker. And she was emptying out the enema can one time, and she noticed white particles that she later told people she thought were parts of their intestines. She thought that they were basically being starved to death.

PHOEBE JUDGE: The nurse took her worries to a doctor, who told her to give the women more food. But when she tried, they refused. They would not eat unless Dr. Hazzard ordered it. Claire and Dora would often faint.

About two months after they had arrived in Seattle, Dr. Hazzard's sanitarium was finally ready. She prepared to transfer Claire and Dora there. Dora's face and hands were wrapped in bandages. The women couldn't stand up by themselves and were loaded on to stretchers. A pair of ambulances came to take them to the harbor, where they would leave on a boat for the sanitarium in Olalla.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

GREGG OLSEN: They were so weak, they willingly did anything the doctor told them to do. And at the dock, an attorney came, and they changed Claire and Dora's will.

PHOEBE JUDGE: We'll be right back.

At the dock, Claire Williamson was barely conscious. Under the supervision of Dr. Linda Hazzard's attorney, Claire wrote that, in the event of her death, 25 Sterling pounds per year should go to the Hazzard Institute of Natural Therapeutics. After the papers were signed, Linda Hazzard and the Williamson sisters left for Olalla.

GREGG OLSEN: Linda Hazzard did not want anyone to know that they were coming to Olalla, so she basically snuck them in and took them up to her home, which was a bungalow-style home in the middle of the woods, and not a sanitarium at all. It was her personal residence.

PHOEBE JUDGE: The sanitarium Claire and Dora had seen advertised had charming cabins and manicured grounds.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

GREGG OLSEN: But when they got there, it wasn't that at all. Nothing had really happened. Nothing had been built. It was a country home, had a upstairs loft attic space, and a fairly decent sized living room with a big stone fireplace, which would become really where they would spend a lot of their time, in front of that fire taking baths or having the enema done.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Claire wrote in a letter, "I am wonderfully better, in fact, getting stronger by leaps. She wrote that, "no one could have given her such genuine love and care as Dr. Hazzard," but her handwriting was messier than usual and her sentences ran together and overlapped.

GREGG OLSEN: You have to know that Linda Hazzard had a charisma. She had an authoritative way of talking to people. She was a woman who persevered in a time where men ruled medicine. There were very few women who really endeavored to be more than a nurse. But here she was, a doctor. And she had the personality, the kind of really stoic, authoritative, sure of herself kind of personality that whatever she said to you was it. There was no argument. She was absolutely right and unyielding.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Linda Hazzard was born in the late 1860s. She grew up in Minnesota, in a two story farmhouse. She was the oldest of seven children. Her parents were interested in food and exercise. They had a mostly vegetarian diet, which was rare at the time. When Linda Hazzard was young, a doctor told her father that his children were suffering from intestinal parasites.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

The doctor prescribed them what were called blue mass pills. 19th-century recipes for these blue mass pills called for mercury, licorice root, and dead rose petals. Abraham Lincoln reportedly started taking blue mass pills for melancholia after a breakup. He stopped after a few years, early in his presidency, telling his former law partner the pills were putting him in a bad mood. Experts today believe he may have suffered from temporary mercury poisoning. The blue mass pills gave the then young Linda Hazzard bouts of vomiting and diarrhea.

GREGG OLSEN: She nearly died. She did recover, but at that moment, I think she had this idea that health and fitness was going to be her calling.

PHOEBE JUDGE: She kept having stomach problems. Other doctors tried to treat her with calomel, another form of mercury. She lost many of her upper teeth. Linda Hazzard was exhausted. She was underweight. She began training as a nurse and looking for a cure for herself.

Meanwhile, on the East Coast, fasting specialists were making headlines. In Manhattan, one doctor fasted for 40 days. *The New York Times* began publishing daily updates on his health. They reported that at least 2000 people bought tickets to see him. He broke his fast for a crowd with watermelon, a steak, and a glass of milk.

Another doctor in Pennsylvania, named Edward Dewey, became a fasting believer after treating a young girl who seemed to be dying. She couldn't keep food or medicine down, only water. None of the drugs Dr. Dewey tried helped her. But after 35 days without food, Dr. Dewey announced that she began to recover. Later, when Edward Dewey's own baby got sick, he refused to give the baby medicine. He said he stopped feeding the child altogether and that the baby recovered.

Edward Dewey read in a physiology textbook that starvation only influenced the body. It left the brain unharmed and able to fight off illness. He swore off manmade medicine and began to teach fasting as a natural cure for any disease.

He wrote two books and Linda Hazzard read them both. She wrote Dr. Dewey and became his student. She tried the fasting cure herself and became obsessed with physical fitness. She would pose naked for photographs.

GREGG OLSEN: Sort of a physical culture kind of pose, where her arms were up and she was making a muscle. I mean, she was really a proponent of fitness, and body, and mind, and spirit-- all of those things coming together. And I think that early childhood experience with her illness was part of that.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Claire Williamson also suffered from stomach issues as a child. Doctors said she suffered from, quote, "morbid cravings for food." They prescribed her small meals every two hours, and a full meal before bed. Later, when Claire went to see a doctor in London for her stomach problems, she was told she had a tilted uterus and that her ovaries were inflamed.

She believed Dr. Hazzard could help her and Dora was willing to do whatever her sister wanted. At the sanitarium, Dr. Hazzard told the sisters they were too weak to see each other. She started keeping them apart. Claire started to question the fasting cure.

GREGG OLSEN: Claire was getting wise to all of it. She was the one thinking that this isn't working out, this is not going to be something that's going to save us, I don't know if we're going to get out of here.

Claire had, up to that point, several attempts to escape, actually, where she tried to crawl out of that space because she couldn't walk anymore. So she tried to crawl down the stairs at one point-- "I'm going to get help, I've got to get you out of here." So Claire, at least, had her wits about her about how serious things were.

Dora, she was thinking that her sister was fading. She was finally getting a clue that something was really wrong. Claire couldn't speak much, and Dora-- finally, the light goes on, and she thinks, wow, we're in trouble, too. So that night, Dr. Hazzard separates them. She takes Dora. She carries her down the stairs.

Her sister's upstairs and all that Dora can hear is a bunch of scraping and moving around of floorboards or or-- something's happening. Maybe furniture is being moved. She couldn't quite determine what was happening up there. And then later, Dr. Hazzard comes down the stairs, stomps down the stairs in that way that she did, and told her that her sister had gone.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Do we know how Dora reacted? Was she too sick to really react?

GREGG OLSEN: In the moment that it happened, she was so weak and so dazed. I mean, think about this. You have no food. You are just running on basically oxygen and hope and your brain is rattled. And she was really confused, and upset, and worried, and then compliant.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Linda Hazzard wouldn't allow Dora to attend her sister's funeral. She said she was too weak. She needed to stay at Olalla.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

GREGG OLSEN: Dr. Hazzard told her that her sister's last wish was that she remained at Olalla for the rest of her life and Dora sort of accepted that.

PHOEBE JUDGE: But before Claire died, she sent a telegram.

We'll be right back.

Claire and Dora had been orphaned as teenagers. When their mother died, their nanny, Margaret Conway, became their primary guardian. In 1910, while Dora and Claire made their way to America, Margaret Conway was in Australia, visiting her family. But she stayed in close touch with the sisters, keeping track of how the trip was going.

GREGG OLSEN: One day, she gets a cable, sent from Olalla, Washington, a place she's never heard of, that says, come at once.

PHOEBE JUDGE: The telegram was from Claire.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Margaret Conway boarded the SS Marama in Sydney. The journey to Seattle took her almost a month. She arrived in Olalla in June. By the time she got there, Claire had died.

GREGG OLSEN: She found Dr. Hazzard in her office. And she produces a little bag of, basically, organs from Claire's body, she says. And she points to a little bit here and a little bit there, indicating that Claire had died of cirrhosis of the liver, and there was nothing to be done to save her. And then a little bit later that day, she takes Margaret down to see Claire's body at a chapel. And Margaret Conway looks at that body, laying in that little casket there, and she tells herself, this isn't Claire.

PHOEBE JUDGE: What did the body look like?

GREGG OLSEN: She said that the body was-- the head was shaped differently than Claire's, and that the skin on it was smooth, almost waxlike looking. It didn't look emaciated at all. It definitely had some characteristics that look like Claire's, but it was an imposter. She was sure of it.

PHOEBE JUDGE: By this point, Dora had been moved to a small, barely-furnished cabin on the property. Dr. Hazzard called it Cabin Claire.

GREGG OLSEN: Dr. Hazzard had a lock on her. I mean, she kept Dora under surveillance the entire time, after Claire had died.

PHOEBE JUDGE: When Margaret Conway first saw Dora, she was shocked at how small she was. "It was ghastly," she said. "I was looking at a death's-head, a skull with skin drawn tightly over the bones. Over it all was a bluish tint."

GREGG OLSEN: There was one meal where Dr. Hazzard had put out some food for Dora to eat and Margaret Conway was there. And there was fresh peas served. The peas had been cooked so they were soft, but nothing but trouble for Dora to even try to eat that. She couldn't even grind that pea down because she was too weak.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Dora told Margaret Conway the treatment was working. She said she was getting better every day. Margaret Conway knew something was wrong. But Dora seemed too weak to be moved.

She decided to stay in Olalla and she tried to get Dora to eat more. Once she snuck cream into Dora's vegetable broth, but it just made her sick. A few weeks passed. Margaret Conway noticed a brass lock on the mailbox that hadn't been there before. She noticed that she and Dora hadn't gotten any letters. She decided she had to do something. It was the 4th of July, 1911.

GREGG OLSEN: Margaret and Dora were standing out looking at the fireworks that Dr. Hazzard had displayed. And by then, there were two or three other patients on the property. And those patients said, please take us. Get us out of here, too. And Margaret said-- basically, she said, we're getting out of here and we're going to make sure this doesn't happen to anybody else.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

PHOEBE JUDGE: A middle-aged man from Seattle, two young women, and the child of Dr. Hazzard's cook were also patients at the sanitarium. Margaret Conway told Linda Hazzard she and Dora would be leaving the next day but Dr. Hazzard said she wouldn't permit it.

GREGG OLSEN: Dr. Hazzard had told her that, no, I'm her guardian. Dora is an imbecile. She's been a verified imbecile, so I'm going to be taking care of her for the rest of her life, which was her sister's wish.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Dr. Hazzard had convinced county authorities to declare Dora insane and appoint herself as Dora's legal guardian. She said Dora's mental troubles were the result of early menopause. Margaret Conway drafted a telegram and snuck to a local store to send it.

She got Dora's family involved and an uncle paid Dr. Hazzard \$500 to let Dora go. When Margaret Conway and Dora left Olalla, Dora had been there for three months. They took a steamboat to Tacoma, where they checked into a hotel and did everything they could to help Dora recover.

GREGG OLSEN: There were photographs, in the paper, of Dora, sitting by Lake Steilacoom and American Lake, that her eyes are dark and filled in, almost like a skeleton, and her little dress that she's wearing looks like it's 10 sizes too big. It's just hanging on her. Her wrists are just little twigs. But she was alive and she was alive because her nanny, her governess, had come all that way to save her.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Dora and Margaret wanted to press criminal charges against Dr. Hazzard for murder. They went to the British Vice Consulate and convinced him to take on Dora's case. His first step was to find out who the so-called Dr. Hazzard was.

GREGG OLSEN: As he digs deeper and looks at her background, the Vice Consulate sees there is a pattern here. There are wealthy people who have died under her care. And he digs even deeper than that and he finds out that there's one case, in Minnesota, where a bunch of this woman's assets had disappeared. So is this a financial crime, or is this a charlatan practicing a cure, or what's really going on here?

PHOEBE JUDGE: He also found out that, eight days before Claire had died, another patient had died under Dr. Hazzard's care. He was a former state legislator, staying in a Seattle hotel. And there were other patients who had died during Linda Hazzard's treatment. They included a 24-year-old civil engineer, a prominent magazine publisher, and a lawyer.

GREGG OLSEN: So the vice consulate was really building that case for the prosecution in Kitsap County, interviewing, talking to people who knew somebody who had died under her care. Of course, all of the deaths-- and there were at least 10 at that time-- all of the deaths had been marked an organic cause or a catastrophic illness. None of them had indicated starvation.

But he gathered up all this material. He went to the prosecution and said, look, we have got to do something and stop this woman. And they did agree. They said, OK, well, we're going to charge her with the murder of Claire Williamson.

PHOEBE JUDGE: When does this become public knowledge, about what Linda Hazzard has done and the charges against her? Or is she still treating people at this point?

GREGG OLSEN: Yeah, she's out she's out on bond. Actually, when gets arrested, she makes a big deal about it, that she is being persecuted because she's a woman. She's being persecuted because she is teaching things that the regular medical profession does not want taught, that you can cure yourself by what you eat or what you don't eat. So she was controversial and she got a lot of attention. So when she was arrested, that was the first time that it appeared in the papers that something was happening at a place called Starvation Heights.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

PHOEBE JUDGE: Newspapers around the world followed the case, with headlines like, "Starvation Doctor Charged," "Woman Doctor is Arrested," and "Rich Men Victims." In January of 1912, almost six months after Dora left Olalla, Linda Hazzard's trial began. In the courtroom, Dora sat next to an empty chair. It was Margaret Conway's idea of a tribute to Claire.

Against the advice of her lawyers, Linda Hazzard testified. One reporter wrote that, "she talked so fast that the court stenographer threw up his hands in despair."

Who are the most important witnesses at the trial?

GREGG OLSEN: Well, Dora was the star witness. I mean, she really was the one who laid it all out there about what had happened to her. But I think one of the most compelling witnesses was Essie Cameron, who was a young nurse from Portland, who had worked there on the property and had been witness to the autopsy.

PHOEBE JUDGE: What did she say?

GREGG OLSEN: She had gone into the bathroom area and she saw Claire's body laying on this little ironing board and Dr. Hazzard was cutting her apart and it was horrific. It was a sight she could never forget. And she made her plan right there, I'm not going to do this anymore. There's something wrong here. Why is she doing this?

And then she found out that Dr. Hazzard had been pulling the gold teeth out of her victims and selling them to a dentist.

PHOEBE JUDGE: The trial went on for nearly three weeks. Many doctors took the stand. One testified that Claire's diet had been less than one fifth of the food required to live.

Dr. Hazzard's defense called the list of over 60 witnesses, among them was a doctor who testified that Claire could not have died of starvation. He told the jury that Claire suffered from intestinal lesions that made her unable to digest food. He testified that no one could have prevented Claire's death.

After the jury reached a decision, the light suddenly went out. The bailiff struck a match for the clerk to read the verdict. Linda Hazzard was found guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced to 2 to 20 years. It was reported that she burst into a storm of denunciation outside the courthouse. That night, at the home for women prisoners, in the county, she collapsed.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Linda Hazzard appealed her conviction. She insisted she had done nothing wrong and people around the world supported her. One well-known doctor proposed that he would fast for 40 days under Dr. Hazzard's supervision. If he lived through it, he demanded, she should get another trial.

People who saw her name in the papers continued to attempt to fast. One woman hired a nurse who was a follower of Dr. Hazzard's. The nurse put her newborn baby on a diet and gave the baby mud baths outside. The baby died. Then, the mother tried to cure herself and starved to death in a hotel room. The court rejected Linda Hazzard's appeal and she went to prison, in Walla Walla, Washington.

What happens to Dora? Does she does she come back to health well?

GREGG OLSEN: Yes. In fact, it's noted in the newspapers at the time that-- you know how the press is-- the little English rose is beaming in the courtroom, or things like that, about how lovely she was and how healthy she looked. And then you could flip back and look at those photographs, that were just horrific, of her sitting there on a little chair with that dress so big and so wrong. I mean, she really did transform back to what she had been before.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Because nothing had really ever been wrong with her to start, she was perfectly healthy.

GREGG OLSEN: Nothing was wrong with her, except for, I don't know, her belief in an idea that happens to people all the time, even today. I mean, when you think about it, a strong person, a person with charisma and presence, can really convince you. And I think it took a while for Dora to be unconvinced. It took the death of her sister.

PHOEBE JUDGE: In 1914, a Tacoma newspaper reported that Dora had gotten engaged to an English clergyman. She married him and settled in England. But a few months later, he drowned. In Walla Walla, Linda Hazzard became editor of the prison newspaper. She received mail from supporters around the world and she would reply, although some countries, like Australia, banned its citizens from writing her back.

One of her supporters, in New Zealand, wrote to the governor of Washington. He included a petition for her freedom. Of the people that signed it, he wrote, "106 persons have fasted for varying periods, up to 52 days. They know that fasting does not cause starvation and death."

The widow of one patient who died under Linda Hazzard's care sent a letter to the state. "I am not an intimate friend of Dr. Hazzard's. In fact, she possesses some personal qualities which irritate and antagonize me. However," she wrote, "she did not have anything like a fair trial." The mayor of Seattle signed a petition on Dr. Hazzard's behalf. Four years after she was sentenced, the governor issued Linda Hazzard a pardon.

GREGG OLSEN: When the governor pardons her, he says, you have to leave the country and you can never come back, and also you've got to surrender your medical license.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Linda Hazzard did not intend to quit anything. She moved to New Zealand and started practicing again. She published another book about fasting. But she didn't stay long.

GREGG OLSEN: Linda Hazzard comes back to Olalla, maybe five years later, and starts building that sanitarium, that one that was going to be funded by the diamonds from Claire Williamson or whoever. But she builds a sanitarium. She opens it up, though not as a fasting clinic and not as a doctor. She's now an instructor. And she calls her place Wilderness Heights Center for Natural Therapeutics. And she's teaching people how to get well.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Did people come?

GREGG OLSEN: People came, but really not many. I mean, her time sort of had passed. And the sanitarium ran maybe 5 or 10 years, into about the 1930s, and then it switched over to a old folks home and what I think an abortion clinic. Because a lot of women would come just spend the day or a night. And I think that's what was happening there. She was-- she was providing abortions for people. But she wasn't able to really do her full regimen of being a doctor as-- and a cure.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Does she spend the rest of her life there?

GREGG OLSEN: She does. Linda Hazzard, you know, she becomes really part of the community, in a weird way. But she-- she wasn't herself anymore. She wasn't the queen bee of the medical establishment, like she had wanted to be.

PHOEBE JUDGE: Linda Hazzard was almost 70 years old when her sanitarium in Olalla caught fire.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

A neighbor remembered watching her wander outside the burning building. "Everything I worked for," Dr. Hazzard said, "it's all gone." A year after the fire, the police found a man in a cabin on her property who had been reported missing by his insurance company. He was alive and one newspaper said he was trembling, in a heavily blanketed bed. He weighed 107 pounds. Dr. Hazzard was arrested. She called her arrest ridiculous.

So she-- she really-- Linda Hazzard, did she actually believe that this treatment worked, do you think?

GREGG OLSEN: I think she totally believed it. She spent years, before she came to the Seattle area, studying and practicing and working on trying to make the fasting cure be something that's a part of mainstream life. But she also understood that she was a scientist, and she was in a field of a medical breakthrough.

She was trying to do something no one else was doing. So I think she allowed herself to accept that you have to break a few eggs to make an omelet. She decided that if a few people had to die along the way, then it was fine, because she was learning and she was going to save so many other people.

PHOEBE JUDGE: By 1938, only a few of Linda Hazzard's supporters remained in Olalla. That year, she became very sick.

GREGG OLSEN: As she gets older, and she becomes ill, she announces to the press that she's going to do something that's going to surprise them, that she's going to take the cure herself. And when she takes the cure, she says, "I'm going to live even longer." And then about 40 days later, she died.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

PHOEBE JUDGE: She starved to death.

GREGG OLSEN: She starved herself to death.

PHOEBE JUDGE: *Criminal* is created by Lauren Spohrer and me. Nadia Wilson is our senior producer. Katie Bishop is our supervising producer. Our producers are Susannah Roberson, Jackie Sojico, Libby Foster, Lilly Clark, Lene Sillesen, and Megan Cunnane. Our technical director is Rob Byers. Engineering by Russ Henry. Julianne Alexander makes original illustrations for each episode of *Criminal*. You can see them at thisiscriminal.com.

Greg Olsen's book is called *Starvation Heights: A True Story of Murder and Malice in the Woods of the Pacific Northwest*. You can find a link in the show notes.

We're on Facebook and Twitter @criminalshow and Instagram @criminal_podcast, and we're also on YouTube, where you can go back and take a listen to some of our favorite past episodes. That's at youtube.com/criminalpodcast.

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