

The Good-bye Door: The Incredible True Story of America's First Femal Serial Killer to Die in the Chair

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Anna Marie Hahn was one of the most notorious serial killers of her time. There was even a rumor circulating that she “had spread arsenic on her ample breasts, which her male victims sucked.” She was sent through the “Good-Bye Door,” the door to Ohio’s electric chair, on December 7, 1938, after being convicted of poisoning two people. She was accused of killing eight, and there were five others who were poisoned but did not die. She maintained her innocence up until her execution, but wrote a confession that she sent to her lawyers, admitting to four of the murders.

The author became interested in Hahn’s case after reading a short article about her, and subsequently learning that some of what had been written about Hahn was inaccurate, particularly the fact that she murdered several husbands. In truth, she only had one husband, and he was alive and well at her trial.

Hahn’s trial captured the attention of pre-war America like no case ever had before. Reporters from all over the United States covered the court proceedings, with one *Cincinnati Enquirer* reporter logging 10,000 words a day on his typewriter. Adding to the enigma that was Anna was her illegitimate thirteen-year-old son who accompanied her on some of her poisoning excursions. It appeared that her initial motive for the poisonings was monetary: she bilked elderly gentlemen out of their money, often slowly poisoning them with oil of croton or arsenic as she asked for money to pay her bills. Once she began killing the elderly men, she found that she had to poison others to cover her tracks. The author depicts the murder of Johan Obendoefler in detail, describing how the arsenic brutally affected the victim’s body on the train and in the Colorado bed-and-breakfast inn where Anna took him.

Franklin is a journalist, public relations executive, and editor, having worked for the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *San Antonio (Texas) Light* and the *Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch*. She writes a syndicated food column for Universal Press Syndicate and has authored or co-authored several books under the name “Peter D. Franklin,” including *Dublin’s Journey*. She took on a remarkable task when she began to write this book. Most of her information was put together from the newspaper reports of the time, as she was unable to find any official documents on the case.

She recreates Hahn’s avarice and her lack of remorse vividly, ending her book with Hahn’s hysterical parting from her son and the “frightful whirring sound like a Fourth of July sparkler” as 1,950 volts surged through her body. True-crime aficionados and those interested in psychology will find this a fascinating story of sociopathic greed.

LYNN EVARTS (November 10, 2006)

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