

Vicki Gaia's Research Page:

Eliza's Hope

1913 Romance set in New York

Mob Hurts 300 Suffragists At Capital Parade - reported by the *New York Evening Journal* - March 4, 1913

The Washington D.C. suffrage parade sparked a resurgence of interest in the American suffrage movement and brought it to the forefront of American news.

Inez Milholland Boissevain was a woman that the younger generation could look up to. An activist, lawyer, athlete and a suffragette, she was also a beautiful woman. She proved that suffragettes were not the stereotypical nervous Nellie's and spinsters espoused by the press, but a lively group of intelligent and attractive women who had something to say.

"Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?" were her last public words. She died at the tragic age of 30, four years before the ratification of the 19th Amendment which granted women the right to vote. This was in 1920.

Inez led the march in Washington, riding a proud white horse, and wearing a long flowing gown. 8,000 suffragettes marched that day, the same day Woodrow Wilson arrived for his presidential inauguration. When Wilson arrived by train and was greeted by a sparse crowd, he couldn't figure out why!

Inez and her fellow suffragettes were insulted, spat on, and some physically abused, while the police watched on or in some cases, assisted the abusers. The ruckus made the papers, and garnered support for the cause.

Here's an excerpt from Eliza's Hope regarding the parade:

Unedited excerpt of Eliza's Hope by Vicki Gaia, copyright 2006, Vicki Gaia:

"Excuse me, may I join you? It's awfully crowded and you seem to have gotten the last seat in the place."

Eliza looked up to find a woman with russet hair sticking out of her soft cloth hat. The redhead balanced a sandwich and cup of coffee and had a stack of leaflets under her arm.

"You better before everything tumbles to the floor," Eliza said.

The woman laughed, "I'm Rachel."

"I'm Eliza. What are you passing out?"

Rachel sat across from Eliza. "There's a meeting Saturday to talk about the march."

Eliza picked up a leaflet but didn't recognize the language.

"Here, you need this one." Rachel switched the leaflet with one in English. "The other is in Yiddish." Rachel bit into her sandwich. "This place has the best pastrami around."

Eliza read the bold type advertising a suffrage parade to be scheduled for May, and a meeting date to discuss the details. "Can anyone go?" Eliza asked.

"Yes, silly, NAWSA is always looking for recruits."

"NAWSA?"

"National American Woman Suffrage Association," she said in one breath. "New York has the largest association and the largest number of recruits. We'd love it if all of New York showed up for the parade. Keep the leaflet."

"I read what happened in Washington," Eliza said. She had devoured the newspaper account of the Suffrage parade in Washington D.C. A riot ensued, turning the peaceful parade into pandemonium. "Aren't you concerned for your safety?"

"The bastards," Rachel covered her mouth, her eyes amused. "Sorry, but I get riled up when I think about those poor women. Beaten by policemen who are supposed to protect us!" She leaned in, and lowered her voice. "I was there, and I tell you, my blood still boils when I think about it. The men couldn't stand our solidarity. They're afraid of us, and our intelligence!"

Eliza became intrigued by the passion in Rachel's voice. "Tell me, did you get beaten by the police?"

"No, but I saw plenty." Rachel reached in her handbag and pulled out a hard pack of cigarettes. "Do you mind?"

Eliza stared at Rachel lighting her cigarette. Several men frowned and gave Rachel dirty leers, but she seemed nonplussed. "You should have seen Inez. Do you know her?"

Eliza shook her head.

"Inez Milholland Boissevain. Such a beauty and a lawyer to boot. Just picture this – Inez dressed in white cape riding a snow white horse, her hair flowing down her

back, wearing a crown. She led the parade. At that moment, I fell in love a little." Rachel looked past Eliza with a dreamy smile. Then she jerked up her head and chuckled between puffs of tobacco. "Forgive me. I'm sometimes a silly goose. Where was I, or yes, there were thousands of us marching that day. Bands playing, floats, it was a sight."

Rachel inhaled deep on her cigarette and blew smoke away from the table. "Then it turned ugly. Bullies blocked our path, yelled out nasty slogans, inciting the crowd. Suddenly it was mayhem. Women being dragged by their hair, beaten by clubs..."

"That's horrible!"

"Ah, yes, but it proved to our benefit. The movement garnered more press and public outcry that day than we'd ever had."

"So you're repeating it in New York."

"I can see you're not from here. We march every spring." Rachel pushed away her empty plate and gathered her leaflets. Eliza smiled at Rachel's empty plate. With all of Rachel's talking, Eliza had no idea how Rachel found the time to eat.

"I better go," Rachel said, squashing her cigarette butt in her plate. "So, I'll see you Saturday? The address is on the leaflet. Amelia Gallo is the speaker, and she's a spitfire. She heads the Ward Two. That's why I'm canvassing these streets. Our group advocates so much more than just the right to vote. The national organization doesn't like us talking about other, more radical issues, but Amelia feels these concerns affect the working class, and poor. These are the women that need our help."

This is what Eliza had been waiting for, a chance to use her mind, and work for a cause close to her heart. Her collegiate friends talked of making a difference and now this opportunity dropped down like a gift from heaven. "I'd like to come and help."

"Take these, they're in English. Pass them out to everyone you meet, regardless of age or sex. Spread the word." Rachel shoved a pile of leaflets towards Eliza. "Good, we need educated women who are above all, adventurous."

"How do you know if I'm any of these things you claim?"

"You're here alone, obviously from the Upper East Side, by the looks of your costume. You made a special trip to see how the other half live. Should I go on?" Rachel pulled down her hat. "Remember, two o'clock."

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