

WOMEN WON VOTE JUST 35 YEARS AGO

Veteran Campaigner Recalls Uphill Battle for Suffrage as Anniversary Passes

By EMMA HARRISON

The thirty-fifth anniversary of woman suffrage passed so quietly yesterday that you almost could have heard a ballot drop. But many women remember when the subject was the password to a big, brassy parade; fiery, though ladylike, oratory or possibly a spot of peaceful picketing.

Those parades are particularly keen in the memory of Mrs. Portia Willis Berg, who, as one of the city's vivacious young socialites, took up with ardor the cause of votes for women. Mrs. Berg, a life-long Greenwich Villager, recalls those days with pleasure, but she does not want to be confused with the pioneers of the movement.

"I know that the parades were a lot of fluff to make them sit up and take notice," she admits now. "We were on the crest and it was a glamorous thing by the time I joined; but the pioneers had sacrificed a great deal."

In on the triumphant finale of the campaign, young Portia Willis stumped the state with the veterans, marshaled several of the city's most spectacular parades, led an elephant into Macdougall Alley in a grand fiesta, marched as Miss New York

in Washington and scattered yellow suffragette roses and pamphlets from airplanes over New York City.

She saw Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, greeted in New York just thirty-five years ago today—the day after the Nineteenth Amendment was proclaimed in Washington.

"The only thing I remember specifically was the radiant face of Mrs. Catt, her arms full of flowers, coming up Thirty-fourth Street from Penn Station," Mrs. Berg recalled.

Mrs. Berg said she first became interested in suffrage when she was 5 or 6 years old. "I noticed that the politicians came around to ask the men to vote, but they didn't ask my mother," she said.

Some years later, when she was one of the town's newest debutantes, the then Miss Willis walked into the headquarters of the suffrage association.

"I've been talking about suffrage, now I want to do something about it," she told Dr. Anna Howard Shaw.

Dr. Shaw decided to send her to the state convention at Niagara Falls. She became a steady walker and talker for suffrage, and was billed over the state as "Miss Portia Willis, brilliant and forceful speaker, daughter of Col. B. A. Willis, Congressman."

Vivid among Mrs. Berg's memories is a lobbying trip to Albany, where the suffragettes met with young Franklin D. Roosevelt.

She thinks that an Albany paper reported it something like this:

"With Inez [Milholland] in black on his right and Portia in

red on his left, what could poor Franklin do?" She remembers one thing he did not do—introduce the suffrage bill.

"We just approached him because he was the type we understood and could talk to and he was the leader of the insurgents," Mrs. Berg reported.

The modern Portia had only one narrow escape with her franchise. She married an Englishman, the late Capt. L. Rodney Berg, whom she met at a League of Nations meeting. But she did not lose the ballot. He became an American citizen.