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The Battle of Stonewall Inn

Lead: Just as the 1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott was a milestone in the quest by Black Americans for their civil rights, the so-called "Battle of Stonewall Inn" represents for many homosexuals a watershed event in their resistance to legal discrimination.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts

Content: It was warm that night and a full moon hung over Greenwich Village in lower Manhattan. Near Sheridan Square, at the Stonewall Inn, a small bar catering mostly to

homosexuals and their friends, a police raid was in progress. The Stonewall was serving liquor without a valid license. The officers had arrested several transvestites or drag queens, men who dress like women and were attempting to take them to jail. This started as just another in a pattern of raids on gay establishments in the Village during the summer of 1969, this time the result was different.

A crowd began to gather and soon grew very ugly. Someone tossed something at the police and that was followed by a hail of rocks, cans and bottles. The officers at first seemed confused since normally there was no resistance to arrests in bars of this type. The gathering crowd became

hostile and threatening forcing the squad to retreat back into the Inn for safety. They barricaded themselves and called for back-up.

For the next four nights the "Battle of Stonewall Inn," continued with ever larger police contingents facing swelling crowds of college students, non-homosexual anti-war radicals, and gay rights proponents. Though there was some damage to the stores around Sheridan Square there was no looting and the riots occasionally took on a theater-of-the-absurd tone, with police tactical squads coming up against a kick-line of dancers baring their way to the Inn.

Though the press largely ignored the Stonewall riots and most Americans were unaware of the events of those June nights, many homosexual men and women look back at these events as the beginning of their attempt to eliminate what they consider to be legal discrimination based on sexual preference.

"A Moment In Time" is produced at the University of Richmond. This is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Shilts, Randy. *Conduct Unbecoming*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

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