



## **A HARD-EARNED RIGHT**

Lydia Dean Pilcher knows Politics.

Just ask her about the donkey.

Pilcher, a movie producer, grew up in Atlanta with a donkey that lived next door in the neighbor's back yard. It was the living and breathing mascot of the Fulton Democratic Party, which her parents were heavily involved in.

Now a resident of Manhattan, Pilcher has fond memories of spending her childhood in Georgia amidst lively political fundraisers and rallies.

So it's no wonder that she is now one of the executive producers of the movie, *Iron Jawed Angels*, which will air at 9:30pm Sunday on HBO. The fiery film tells the true story of suffragists Alice Paul (Academy Award winner Hilary Swank), Lucy Burns (Frances O'Connor) and a handful of others who fought for and earned women the right to vote in 1920.

Just last weekend, Pilcher was in Savannah to celebrate the premiere of the film, which was shown to a private audience at Trustees Theater. She was there with her mother, Maxine Harris - a Savannah resident and an active member of the Savannah League of Women Voters.

Harris, already a fan of her daughter's work - which includes "The Talented Mr. Ripley," "Jesus' Son," "Cradle Will Rock," "The Perez Family," "Mississippi Masala," "Hysterical Blindness," "Disappearing Acts." And the Emmy-nominated "Normal" - did nothing but rave about "Iron Jawed Angels."

"It's just outstanding," she said. "It's such an important part of history because of the way these women were determined to succeed in their efforts. What they went through to get there should impress upon all of us the importance of voting."

In fact, before Pilcher gave a firm nod to the script, she sent it to her mother for an opinion.

"I read it and I cried and I said, 'Lydia, I want to picket the White House,' and she, like a good daughter, said 'OK, You can come,' and I did," Harris said.

In fact, Harris had a small role in the movie as one of the suffragists protesting in front of the White House. She proudly held a banner that said, "Mr. President - How Long Must Women Wait for Liberty?"

"I kept reminding myself to stop smiling," Harris said. "I clamped my jaw shut, and I was definitely an 'Iron jawed angel.'"

That was the nickname given to the suffragists after they organized a protest at the White House, were thrown in jail, and starved themselves to make their point in the years leading up to the passing of the 19th Amendment.

While historically significant, the events of that time period are cloudy for many.

Even the cast - producers and writers included - had to brush up on their history to get a firm grip on what actually occurred.

"'Iron Jawed Angels' is not a well known story," Pilcher explained. "We were sheepishly admitting that we didn't know much about that particular part of our history - In that sense we felt like it was an important story to be telling, to (show) the intensity of what it took for women to get the vote."

The movie debuts on HBO at a fitting time. Today is the anniversary of the League of Women Voters, and Sunday is the birthday of famous suffragist Susan B. Anthony. Local members of the Savannah League of Women Voters couldn't be any prouder.

"I believe the inspiration of 'Iron Jawed Angels' will last long past movie-time. Every woman, and man, who sees this film will think differently about their right to vote," said Judy Jennings, Savannah's league president. "It will seem more precious to them and they will never let an Election Day pass without casting their hard earned vote."