

Legalized Gambling That's What It Was!

BY VERA MILLER



TODAY, the big thing with the parent teacher groups, sisterhoods and the gift shops is selling Hanuka decorations. Today, you're just not adapting yourself to the modern way of Jewish life unless festooned across your bay window is a dangling blue and white (with silver is extra) conglomeration of letters joyously proclaiming 'Happy Hanuka.' And from somewhere in the house must dangle a multi-fanned webbed Star of David.

The easy directions for assembling these items are enclosed in the cellophane package. You just need a master's degree in handicraft to put it together.

However, because it helps the children to get in the holiday spirit this fun job is delegated to the kids who do a bang-up job putting Tab 'A' into Tab 'B,' except when Tab 'C' is to be folded counter clockwise. The home now properly decor'd for the holiday, visions of Hanuka Gelt dance in the little heads of the little children as they drift into dreams each night.

Remember—Hanuka! The social and economic status of the relatives and their relative Dun and Bradstreet ratings, was set at the fiscal year erev Hanuka. Today it is not fashionable, but Hanuka was then pronounced with a guttural Chuch—Chanuka!

Today's coupon clipper, dividend doodler, broker and customer's man probably received his first introduction to capitol gains, cumulative preferreds, Mutual funds and Blue Chip relatives at Hanuka.

This was the gathering of the clan from Logan Square, Humboldt Park, Douglas Blvd. and Jeffery on the south side. This was the time of noise, new babies being introduced, practiced manners and the smell of Lifebouy soap. This was the time of Hanuka gelt.

Because the gelt was allocated by age, the luckless youth whose birthday was a week after, became the blushing center of attraction.

Should he be in the 25c line or the 50c line?

The board of trustees then bargain, caucus, negotiate, caucus and after much consideration the directors which include the chochem Uncle Balle', Ma and Pa, the decision was made.

The 50c line.

The reason was never heard and no questions were asked of this appellate court.

Shouts of Hanuka Gelt ring out from the sun parlor to the swing on the enclosed back porch. It's post-time and the gate is up! The Hanuka gelt is presented and then follows the period of the meetings of the stockholders.

Ma and Pa round up the kids in

the front hallway, the bedroom or the backroom and into a knotted handkerchief or a crevice of Ma's genuwine leather pocket book, each one drops their holdings.

All pre-arranged.

What's to go for the donation to the Shul, What's to go to buy clothes and what is to be doled out to the individual stock holder as earnings-tax free. How much of the gelt from the older kids that found its way back to Fluky's to pay back what was owed on hot dogs and french fries is probably what kept Fluky's in business from one December to the next.

Happy little songs like "Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel" are heard from the dining room as the assembled pimpled boy cousins and fingernail biting girl cousins sat around playing the twirling game with the little dreidels.

The little Hebrew characters twirled as each group played its game and thumbs and nutcrackers were employed to get at the morsels of nut meats from the collection of nuts (the ones on the table in the soup bowl—not the ones gathered around the table).

So, while the adults were drinking tea from their saucers, breaking pieces of sponge cake into the tea, discussing the personal habits of each of their off springs as compared to their progress of the previous year, the kids sat around twirling dreidels, mumbling little sounds, cracking the nuts and wishing they stopped biting their nails so they could pick out the piece way inside the crevice of the walnut cave.

This was a scene of domestic togetherness except for one thing. The happy little mumbling sounds were "bets" and the little assortments of walnuts, pecans and filberts was the "take."

The kids were just plain out-and-out gambling!

If all the dreidel-twirlers of yesteryear were to gather on the strip at Las Vegas, the bank would break! Maybe the holiday-takers of today going to Las Vegas in December are reverting to a Freudian demand. Today their place at the gambling table may be reminiscent of Hanuka.

Everyone had a lucky token. A lucky belt on the trousers, a certain chair or the appearance of an older cousin at the gaming table.

So—dreidel twirlers of yesteryear, rise up and be heard.

It was a little difficult reading the tiny Hebrew characters then—give the kids bigger ones this year. It was difficult for you to remember the name of each Uncle and Tante—forgive the little ones this year and be a sport.