WAY BACK WHEN

Legalized Gambling
That's What It Was!

BY VERA MILLER

TODAY, the big thing with the parent teacher groups, auctioneers, and the gift shops is galaxy reflections. 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 choice shops) electric menorah, a cluster of letters joyously proclaiming Happy Hanukkah. And somewhere in the house must dangle a multi-fanned webbed Star of David.

The easy directions for assembling the Hanukkah package you just need a master's degree in handicraft to put them together. However, because it helps the children to get in the holiday spirit this fun job is delegated to the kids who do a hang-up job putting Tab 'A' into Tab 'B', except when Tab 'C' is to be folded cornerwise. The home now properly decorates for the holiday, visions of Hanukkah Gelt dance in the little heads of the little children as they drift into dreams each night.

Remember—Hanukkah! The social and economic status of the relatives and their relatives Dun and Broides, Ratings, was set at the fiscal year every Hanukkah. Today it is not fashionable, but Hanukkah was then pronounced with a guttural Ch—Chana.

Today's coupon clipper, dividend distributor, broker, and customer's name probably received his first introduction to capital gains, cumulative preferreds, Mutual funds and Blue Chip relatives at Hanukkah. This was the gathering of the clan from Logan Square, Humboldt Park, Douglas Blvd. and Jeffery on the south side. This was the tone of noise, new babies being introduced, practical manners and the smell of Lye soap. This was the time of Hanukkah.

Because the gelt was allocated age, the luckless youth whose birthday was a week after, became the blushing center of attraction. Should be be in the 25c line or the 50c line?

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

The reason was never heard and no questions were asked of this august body.

Shouts of Hanukkah 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 Hanukkah gelt is presented and then follows the period of the stockholders. Ma and Pa round up the kids in

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

All prearranged.

When the time comes after 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 it thumps down the name of a stock, and if no, pay back what was owed on hot dogs and French fries is probably just what kept Flax'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 pinched 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 turn, the gelt was given or accepted, dollars were employed to get at the morsels of meat, nuts 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 saucepans, gelt pieces on the table were discussed. Talking about the personal letters of each of their offspring, as compared to their progress of the 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 inside the crevice of that container.

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

The kids were just plain outlandish about it.

If all the dreidel-twirlers of yester-year were to gather at 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 Freisian demand. Today their place at the gambling table may be reminiscent of that old Persian.

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

So—dreidel twirlers of yester-year, rise up and be heard.

It was a little difficult: reading the tiny Hebrew characters then turning to the kids that have been told this year to remember the name of each Uncle and Tante—forgive the little ones this year and be a sport.