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December 25 is a time to enjoy potatoe pancakes and miracles

By SHELLEY RABINOVITCH
Once again it is time to deck the halls with holly, sprinkle aerosol-can snow on windows, and re-fit those laminated plastic evergreen trees into their stands. Or, perhaps you are instead pulling out the eight-armed candle holders and preparing huge batches of latkes (potatoe pancakes). Christmas and Chanukah inevitably fall close together in December, usually on the third and fourth weeks of the month. Christmas, the celebration of Christ's birth (not His birthday) is set on the 25th of December, a time formerly reserved for the festival of the Saturnalia in ancient Rome. Saturnus, lord of husbandry and the arts of life, was a festive lord in whose honour the winter solstice was dedicated.

YULETIDE
The Yuletide, as Christmas is often known as, was the name for the Anglo-Saxon festive time. Yule is usually traced as being a corruption for the old Norse word 'jol', which means feasting and revelry. At this time in the Norse countries, the Vikings, being unable to go out to sea, would spend their time drinking and feasting in honour of their gods.

A custom still persisting in Christian mythology is that of 'Wassailing', or 'going a Gooding', which is when the poorer folk of a community would go to their richer neighbours asking for good or drink to make their Christmas merrier. Often the benefactor of a group would be given a sprig of holly, mistletoe, or a bunch of primroses in thanks. In modern practice, groups of youngsters will go from house to house singing Christmas Carols in return for a bite to eat, some money, or a spiced, mulled ale.

PLUM PORRIDGE

Plum pudding, now considered a requirement for a proper Christmas, is less than two centuries old. Originally Christmas pies, called mince-pies, were eaten as a good luck offering. Plum Porridge however, was traditional in Scotland and England for over three hundred years, and can be indirectly traced back to Druidic times when a flaming pile of fruits and nuts would be given as a winter solstice gift to the gods. Nowadays a proper Scottish pudding will be preceded by a Highland piper in full regalia, and the pudding will be ushered in on a raised platform, all the while flaming.

Chanukah is the Jewish Festival of Lights, which celebrated the consecration of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (about the First Century B.C.). The Temple, desecrated by the people then occupying Israel, was freed by the Maccabee family, and while trying to put things to right, it was noticed that properly blessed lamp oil was not to be found. A small vial was subsequently found, but as it takes eight days for new oil to be prepared all feared that the small amount in the flask would be insufficient.



The miracle occurred when the single day's amount actually lasted long enough for a new batch of oil to be prepared.

Chanukah, like all other Jewish holidays, is dated according to the Jewish Lunar calendar. And it is for this reason that the holiday seems to never fall on the same days of the Gregorian calendar. The miracle of the oil is commemorated by Jews all over the world with the lighting of one additional candle for every night of the eight days. On the first night of Chanukah a special candle, called the shammos, is lit and this candle in turn is used to light the first commemorative candle. On the

second day two candles plus the shammos are lit, and so on until the last night when the house is ablaze with light.

Chanukah has its significance for young and old alike, and the tradition of tzedukkah, or charity, is very prominent at this time. Children play a game called 'Dreidel', named after the four-sided top with which it is played. Each side of the top has a Hebrew letter on its which stands for a word. Nun stands for the word 'ness', or 'miracle', the letter gimel stands for 'gadol' or 'a great', hay signifies 'hayah' or 'happened', and shin means 'shah' or 'there'. Literally, the phrase is 'a great miracle happened here', but since the re-creation of the State of Israel the phrase has become 'a great miracle happened here'.

The play of the game is simple; depending on which side the dreidel falls on the player whose turn it is must either give or take some percentage of the kitty (usually measured in pennies). After the game the winner is supposed to give half his winnings to charity.

During Chanukah the elders usually give children gifts in the form of real and candy coins mixed in little bags. Again, the child is supposed to give half the real money to charity. However, since Christmas and Chanukah fall so close to each other many North American Jewish families have taken up the practice of giving their children some sort of gift instead of cash.

SING-SONG

Chanukah is a time of visiting families for the Jew, and it is not uncommon at this time of the year for dinners to be large and elaborate — and long. Potatoe latkes are cooked for hours, and steaming piles of this traditional food are the rule rather than the exception. After the meal is over the family will usually have a sing-song which often lasts into the wee hours of the morning.

In the last few decades Chanukah has taken on a deep political meaning as well as its old one. The significance of the lights has also come to symbolize the ray of hope that sustains Jewish political prisoners in different countries. Often free Jewish families will send packages of candles and candlabres to interred individuals, and some Jews see each candle light anywhere in the world as shedding a ray of hope for every incarcerated Jew.

...and what are you going to do for winter break?

By ARA PARKER
Elmer Wicks, day caretaker in the Fine Arts building:

"I get approximately five days off for Christmas. The rest of the time it's working here."
Nancy Nicol, graduate student in Visual Arts:

"Gee, what am I doing? Splitting Toronto, I guess. Taking a trip to PEI, visiting friends and making an audio recording of a



Dan Lavery

beach."

Dan Lavery, first year Psychology student:

"Looking for a girlfriend who won't cost me any money. I'm working Christmas Eve, Day, New Year's Eve, Day, — I'm a bartender at the Airport Holiday Inn."

Professor Koehler, (Natural Science):

"I'm going to Cambridge Bay, North West Territories to do a research assignment."

Ted Dwyer, first year Arts student:

"I'm going to Acapulco. I wish I could go today. I want to see if what they say about Mexican girls is really true."

John Wilkinson, Co-ordinator of Matrix Fine Arts department:

"I'll tear down a wall in my studio and take the dog for long walks".



Mrs. Banks

Hank Jacobs, graduate student:

"I'm going back to Winnipeg to meet my old girlfriends. I'm going to appeal my bursary, close bank accounts, visit the old school, go out to the country and break my habit. Smoking? No, picking my nose in subways."

Mrs. Banks, Head cashier in the York bookstore:

"I'll be spending time with my children."