



# The Gambler's Daughter: A Personal and Social History

*Annette B. Dunlap*

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*In exploring her father's own gambling addiction, the author uncovers a hidden history of gambling in the Jewish community.*

Screening calls from her father's creditors, hiding his mail from her mother—being the child of a compulsive gambler wasn't easy, and Annette B. Dunlap thought for years that her experience was a singular one. In early adulthood, she was fortunate enough to learn that she was not unique, that other children had grown up with parents (usually fathers) addicted to gambling. But when she learned, shortly before her mother died, that her grandfather had also been involved in gambling, she realized the extent to which gambling was a part of her family history. As she delved further into the subject, she also discovered the extent to which gambling is, in her words, “a peculiarly Jewish addiction.”

Framing the issue of gambling in both historical and sociological terms, Dunlap examines the struggle between the “official” Jewish community—Jewish leaders have long either condemned or ignored the evils of gambling—and the significant number of everyday Jews who continue to gamble, many at a level that would be considered addictive. Gambling continues to be a serious problem within the Jewish community, Dunlap argues, regardless of whether the person is Orthodox or a Jew in name only.

The Gambler's Daughter is both a personal story of a father's gambling addiction and a more general inquiry into the hidden history of gambling in the Jewish community. Readers who either live or have lived with an addictive family member will find the book useful, as will those students of Jewish social history interested in a long-ignored facet of American Jewish life.

“...an honest and engaging memoir ... Dunlap gives her readers fascinating insights on self-discovery, family heritage, and, most importantly, forgiveness.” — Senator John Heinz History Center

“Annette Dunlap's The Gambler's Daughter is a daring and engaging fusion of her family history with the history of the relationship of Jews to gambling. Meticulously researched and frequently startling, this brief and deeply motivated reflection achieves a triumph of entertaining enlightenment.” — Sidney Offit, author of *Memoir of the Bookie's Son*

“The Gambler's Daughter is a well written and concise book, moving back and forth between Dunlap's personal narrative, current research, and the larger gambling cultures and society in which this memoir takes place. It is a timely and important contribution to the gambling literature, helping us understand the family life, struggles, and recovery of those who live(d) or grew up with someone with a gambling disorder—these are the voices often forgotten in the treatment, policy making, and research on gambling and they need to be heard.” — Brian Castellani, author of *Pathological Gambling: The Making of a Medical Problem*

“Once I started reading The Gambler's Daughter I could not put it down. There are millions of adult children of compulsive gamblers in this world. It's wonderful that Annette Dunlap has written about this very important issue. This book perfectly captures the feelings of the child/wife of a gambler.” — Arnie Wexler, Certified Compulsive Gambling Counselor (CCGC), Arnie and Sheila Wexler Associates

Annette B. Dunlap is an independent scholar and journalist. She is the author of the award-winning Frank:

The Story of Frances Folsom Cleveland, America's Youngest First Lady, also published by SUNY Press.  
She lives in North Carolina.

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