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Mayor Emanuel Interviews Historian and Columnist Ron Grossman on “Chicago Stories” Podcast

On this week's episode of [Chicago Stories](#), Mayor Emanuel was joined by historian and long-time Chicago Tribune columnist Ron Grossman to talk about everything from Chicago's old Ward battles, to our evolving ethnic neighborhoods, the Albany Park of their youth, and the ways the town he loves has changed and stayed the same.

Ron is himself a proud Chicagoan born and raised. Hailing from Albany Park's tight-knit Jewish community of the 1930s and 1940s, Ron's own story got its start on Chicago's West Side where he was born.

Like many members of Chicago's Jewish community at the time—including Mayor Emanuel's—Ron's family first settled in Lawndale in the “Great Vest Side” after emigrating from Eastern Europe. In the case of Ron's grandparents, it was from a small shtetl outside of Bialystok, Poland.

The move to Albany Park came shortly after Ron's parents were married, but it took some time for it to stick. “The Ravenswood-El had just opened up, so for young marrieds it was to move that way, but the Depression got in the way of it,” Ron said. “As times got tough they would move back, so we went back and forth, back and forth.”

In fact, times were so tight that at one point Ron remembers sharing an apartment with another family. “We were living on Kedzie just down from that synagogue, two families in a one bedroom apartment in Albany Park,” Ron said.

Over the course of their conversation Mayor Emanuel and Ron “kibitzed” on everything from favorite Chicago neighborhoods (“*the beauty there is how many different groups have come down it*”), favorite Chicago stories (“*anything to do with the first Mayor Daley was fabulous*”), and even discovered their families had attended the same synagogue—Congregation of Mt. Sinai in Albany Park.

But in the end everything they talked about intersected on Chicago's unique status as “the most American of American cities,” a big city made up of small towns, which Ron attributes to the constant flow of immigrants who have moved to Chicago and continually shape its identity.

“Each grab a piece of real estate and are only vaguely aware that there’s a city beyond that,” Ron said, “Other cities—New York, Philadelphia—they were established before the big years of immigration, but Chicago was a city made of immigrants.”

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