



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 17, 2018

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

Mayor Emanuel Interviews Dr. Benjamin Emanuel for Father's Day on Chicago Stories Podcast

On this week's episode of [Chicago Stories](#), Mayor Emanuel was honored to be joined by his own father, pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Emanuel, for a special conversation on parenting and fatherhood, as well as a look back on his own life and long career.

Dr. Emanuel first arrived in America from Israel in 1953, landing in Chicago two years later for his medical residency at Mount Sinai Hospital in the city's West Side. Then, following a brief stay in Israel, Dr. Emanuel returned in 1959 for good to set about establishing his career and make his mark on his new home.

Like countless immigrants before and since, Dr. Emanuel arrived young and ambitious, but also with a language barrier, no money, and a young and growing family in tow.

"I didn't have a penny in my pocket when I came here," Dr. Emanuel said. "To open a practice was very difficult. You have to decide on what part of the city. You have to be very close to the family. You don't know how people will conceive to come to you as a foreigner."

Things started slow—during the first month Dr. Emanuel didn't even have one patient. But over time work began to pick up, and ultimately became one of the largest pediatric practices in the Chicago area.

"Gradually when I worked in the hospital people realized that you can do a good job, so they start referring patients to you," Dr. Emanuel recalled, "and over the years I had a bigger practice than my four partners."

As if Dr. Emanuel's early challenges weren't enough, he threw in a few of his own. First by going up against City Hall for permitting the use of lead paint in Chicago, which was developmentally hazardous and even fatal for children.

"I felt what I'm doing with the lead poisoning is to save kids lives," Dr. Emanuel said. "I did what I thought was for the health of the kid."

Dr. Emanuel also quit the American Medical Association in protest of its objection of national healthcare at the time.

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

Both moves could have been problematic for his practice, his career, and the well-being of his family, but he did it anyway.

“You don’t think about the future or anything else, you do what’s right,” Dr. Emanuel said. “You have to decide in life what’s right and what’s wrong.”

It’s with that outlook that Dr. Emanuel and Mrs. Emanuel raised their own children.

As Dr. Emanuel told the mayor, for all the work he put into his medical practice, fatherhood was his first job, and one explicitly guided by the purpose-driven values of honesty, ambition, duty, and independence.

Dr. Emanuel’s own expertise as a pediatrician also informed his own approach to fatherhood.

“First of all, the character of a child between one-and-four is the most important,” Dr. Emanuel said. “You have to pay attention to them. You have to make sure they don’t get sick. You’re giving instruction. I remember still when we sat around the table every Friday—the family—and we discussed.”

That Friday table was Shabbat dinner, a mandatory event in the Emanuel home, where instead of going out, everyone stayed in to talk politics, family, and look back at the week’s events.

It’s a legacy now that Dr. Emanuel looks on with pride.

“I am proud that I raised four kids that are honest. That are successful. That are compassionate for what they do,” Dr. Emanuel said. “That you give really a lot of your life for the job you do, and I know you’re doing a good job.”

Be sure to tune into the full episode as Dr. Emanuel also talks about his role in Israel’s War of Independence, how his name went from “Auerbach” to “Emanuel,” and the first time he met the young woman who became his wife.

Listen and subscribe to Chicago Stories podcast on [Apple Podcasts](#), [SoundCloud](#) and [Spotify](#).

###