

Skokie's side

Smith tells 'other'side' of '78 Nazi story

by Jennifer Waters

Amid a friendly atmosphere during a WBBM-TV talk show with Lee Phillip last week, Skokie Mayor Al Smith discussed with author David Hamlin the situations surrounding the neo-Nazi rally attempt in Skokie in 1978.

The mayor, obviously pleased with the turnout of the "Noonbreak" show, said that he and Hamlin did not display any personal adversary on the air.

Hamlin supported the American Civil Liberties Union with their fight to protect the Nazi's constitutional right to freedom of speech during the 1977-78 court battles to keep the Nazis out of Skokie. He has just released a book, "The Nazi-Skokie Conflict," and was in Chicago to promote it.

"It went really well," the mayor said. "David talked about a simple case of the Nazis first amendment right to freedom of speech and I interrupted him right away."

"I told him (Hamlin) that probably

he and the ACLU call Nazism and swastikas freedom of speech, but I call them terrorism. There is a distinct difference between speech and terror," the mayor explained.

He said that he wanted to point out to Hamlin his inaccuracies within his book. "In three places within the book he was very inaccurate, and he should have known better. When he spoke of the Illinois Supreme Court decision, the Circuit Court of Appeal decision and the Supreme Court decision, he said that there was unanimous approval, when there was dissention (in each decision)."

The mayor's decision to appear on the talk show with Hamlin and in turn, Gil Gordon of the legal department's decision to be aired on a WGN talk show, were to tell the "other side" of the Skokie story, Smith said.

"If we had not gone on those shows, then Hamlin would have had free reign of the entire situation and it would go uncontested. That is why it was incumbent upon us to tell our side of the Skokie story," he explained.



SKOKIE MAYOR Albert Smith discusses the controversy surrounding the Nazi attempt to march on Skokie with Lee Phillip, host of "Noonbreak," a WBBM-TV talk show. See story on page 7.