Final Corrected Pepi Joskowitz Transcript*

*Note: Pepi felt she only needed to correct a few family nan1es (speilings etc) and add one. She told me the few changes over the phone on Dec. 2nd 2004. Pepi also wanted a note on the last page of a few more issues dealing with Holocaust survivors and their families. So I added the note.

Tape 1/Side 1

AP: My name is Arthur Pronin and this is Carla Curtis and today we are interviewing Pepi Nichols on October 20th 2004 for the University of Houston Oral History Project about second generation Holocaust survivors. Pepi if you could just begin by telling us a little bit about your parents' background. I read a little bit about your mother and her experiences in Auschwitz and Plaszow and Krakow. If you could just elaborate a little bit on their experience in the Holocaust.

PN: My parent Louise Klein Stopnicki was born in Krakow Poland in 1925 and she grew up there in a fairly sophisticated family. Her father had a business, a scrap metal business. She always says her grandmother [Rachel Bucheister] owned a business that was a textile business which is mentioned in Schindler's List. Mr. Stern, the bookkeeper, was actually the bookkeeper for my mother's grandmother's business. So she actually remembers him coming to the house. She has a brother who survived the war, my uncle Solomon Stopnicki, and it was just the two of them. They had a lot of cousins and aunts and uncles. My [mother's] father [Jacob Klein Stopnicki] was the youngest child of I believe six kids. He was born after his father died. My [mother's mother Pesel Bucheister Stopnicki] was also one of six children and recently we were able to compile a family tree. So probably over fifty relatives were killed during the Holocaust. The only survivors of the family were my mother and her brother Sol and one cousin [Eiiezer Storch], who actually went to Palestine before the war broke out.

Mother was in the Krakow ghetto and in Plaszow, the concentration camp. She was in Auschwitz, she was in Oederon, which was another factory camp, and was actually liberated from Terezin where she found out her brother was alive. My father [Rubin Joskowitz] is from Sosnowiec Poland, which isn't too far from Krakow, and he came from quite different

background. He had two brothers, and his father [Godol Joskowitz] was a tailor. His mother was a housewife and they lived in a small shtetl. They lived out in the country in a small home and grew up in a much more rural community. My dad did not go to school, he probably dropped out in the third or fourth grade, whereas my mother went to public school. She went to Jewish gymnasium, which is like a Jewish high school and my uncle actually was in high school when the war broke out. My dad, [who lived in] Sosnowiec, was close to the border, so he was actually taken to one of the very first work camps in October of 1939. [This was] right after the onset of the war.

AP: Almost immediately after Hitler invaded ?

PN: Absolutely, really at the beginning of the war. He was in quite a few different work camps. He was in Dachau, he was in Gross Rosen, he was in a camp that I don't remember the name of that was in Czechoslovakia as well. He was liberated on a death march. He is not sure where they were going, but he feels that they were going to the river probably to be drowned and before they got to the river some woman, some German woman, told the guards to leave them alone. You know, "the war is almost over leave them alone" and so the guard locked them up in like a barn, some sort of barn or house or something. They left and the next day there were no guards and they found out they were free. So that's how he was liberated.

They [my parents] met in a D.P. [Displaced Persons] camp in Landsburg Germany and they lived there for a while. I was born in Landsburg Germany [March 3, 1949] They came to .America with me in October of 1949. We came straight to Houston. We have been here ever

since, never left. (laughs) My uncle went to Galveston a year later and then came to Houston when my parents had enough room to bring him here.

AP: Well that's a very interesting set of experiences. My next question would be this: how has being raised by Holocaust survivors impacted your life?

PN: Well there are definitely issues. There are two different kinds of survivors basically. There are survivors who talked about the war constantly to their children, never let them forget anything. My parents never discussed the war. I remember at an early age asking about my grandparents. [They said] something like they died in a rail car. So, my parents did not really talk about the Holocaust. On the other hand there is a saying that the elephant sits in the middle of the living room, there is something there that no one really wants to talk about but everybody knows about.

Definitely there are issues and things that come up being a child of survivors that you don't realize until you talk to other survivors. Food obviously is a big issue. We always had to eat everything. If you open the refrigerator of a Holocaust survivor I will tell [you that in] ninety-nine percent of them there will not be one square inch for anything else to be put in the refrigerator. [In their minds] there's never enough food in the house. They don't ever throw away anything. Every now and then I go to my mom and dad's and I will say, "okay mom this one-tablespoon of jam lets get rid of it. You got five jars of one tablespoon of jam." So, it obviously is an issue.

My mom has this little glass panel at the Holocaust museum over the area where the camps are and in it she talks about hunger, that she only had a piece of bread and listening to my

mom's oral history and hearing her talk about how you were just so so hungry all the time. From the time you were in the ghetto until the very end of the war you were always always hungry. So, food is a huge issue. Not going to the grocery store is not a complete day for my mom and she goes everyday for something. In Houston that's not generally the way people shop. They usually fill up their refrigerator once a week.

So that is an issue, but I think that in my case I like to really look at the positives, the positive things my parents brought to me and I my sister. I have a younger sister who was born here in Houston. They know, and we know and understand that family is very very important. And so we are a very close family. It is very tiny obviously since everyone perished during the war but we are very close. We are a religious family, we are not orthodox by any means but we do go to synagogue for the holidays. We have Shabbat dinners and we are very much aware of the holidays and are religious in that context.

The importance of keeping the memory alive is very very important in our family. Though we are not obsessed with it again, but it is something that we are aware of Often times I look back and realize that my parents have given us this amazing strength and we know that no matter what you can really persevere and can survive anything. You just need to push on and do whatever it takes to take care of whatever needs to be taken care of So I think that is a positive.

I think that also a positive is seeing how much they have accomplished. My parents aren't real wealthy but yet they really accomplished a lot coming to a new country: having a nice home. My mother and dad, they love lovely things. They have nice paintings and *chachkahs* [knick-knacks] and things. They love things. Of course they also don't throw away anything so that is the other side to that. (laughs) So it is a little bit of a balance.

There are little funky idiosyncrasies that pertain to my parents that may pertain to others as well. Growing up my dad [had a] sock fetish, because he never had socks during the war. Even growing up as a little girl I mean you could just not walk around without shoes and socks on. He just now is allowing us to wear sandals. (laughter) He had this thing; he didn't want people to think he couldn't afford socks for his family so we always had to wear socks.

We could never eat a potato skin in our house. If you eat a baked potato and want to eat the skin you could never do that in front of our dad. Me and my sister [Geri Joskowitz] would go into the den pretending like we are taking our plates to the sink. While in the den we would eat the potato skins, which seems kind of weird.

AP: Why could you not eat potato skins?

PN: In one of the camps where he worked he worked in the kitchen and he was supposed to peel potatoes and what he did was peel the potatoes very thick, so there were thick skins because they, the Jews, could take the skins and eat them. They could cook them up and eat them, so he cut them very thick. A commandant or some soldier came in and caught him and beat him severely for that. So, he couldn't eat a potato skin because after that the thought of eating a potato skin was something that he couldn't do. He just couldn't stand to see us eat it either because I guess again it made him think of that plus made him think he wasn't so poor that his daughters had to eat potato skins. Some of those things are there, not the most horrible things to grow up with. Actually we did not know about why we couldn't eat potato skins until we were teenagers. My dad talked very little about the war. So we knew that this had to do with what happened to him, but didn't necessarily understand how it all came together.

AP: So did your parents ever come to the point to where they have talked openly about the war?

PN: Not until they did the oral histories. They did an oral history for my sister who was very involved with a second-generation group in Austin. They did oral histories I think probably in the '80s, like '83,'85 somewhere in like that. Quite frankly it took me over a year to watch it. What you don't know you don't know. Because the Holocaust is such a terrible, terrible time in history and you hear so many horrible awful stories you don't really want to know exactly what horrible things happened to your parents. Whatever you imagine you figure can't be any worse than reality so you don't want to know, but I finally listened to it. In fact I asked my son, my younger son [Aaron Joskowitz], who at that time was twelve or thirteen if he would watch it with me. "Oh that tape," he said, "oh I saw that a long time ago." So he wasn't as scared of finding out what happened to his grandparents as I was.

AP: Well that brings me back to a question that kind of popped up in my mind. You were talking about memory and it was very important in your family to preserve the memory.

PN: Not only the memory of the family. My kids, both my boys were named after my mom's dad [Jakob Klein Stopnicki] and my dad's dad [Godol Joskowitz]. My younger cousin [Jack Stopnicki] was also named after my mom's dad and dad's dad. So that was part of it. We also knew how important it was to keep our faith, that our whole family was destroyed because they were Jewish. So it was very important that we remained Jewish, that I married somebody that was Jewish, that my kids were raised Jewish. That was the ultimate way to keep the memory

going. Both of my boys, when they had their *Bar Mitzvahs,* in their *Bar Mitzvah* speeches they talked about that they were continuing something that their families had started and that Hitler was not able to destroy. By living and having their own *Bar Mitzvahs* and raising their own families that memory be kept alive and strong.

AP: I've read many accounts of second generations survivors who say that memory seems to pervade almost everything. Many survivors have become more religious because of what happened in the past to their parents. Does memory of the Holocaust dominate you or your family?

PN: It just varies. I think because of the museum I've become much more involved and so that has been something that is more important, but it is not something I talked about at all when I was a kid. It's not something we talk about in its own right. Again because my parents didn't talk about it constantly, it was a different situation.

I have dealt with memory and its impact on me in several different ways. Number one, I've been very involved in the second generation for more than 20 years. Number two, I've gone to quite a few conferences that are second generation conferences in different parts of the country, and because of that I think its helped me to understand a little bit more where second gen is coming from and how really varied we are just like anybody else. The experiences that our parents have do affect us, but they affect us differently and quite often I've had this observance: that the trauma that our parents went through is not any more so than kids who were raised by parents who came from alcoholic families. In fact, as I grew up and as a teenager [and as I was getting older] I would look at some of the interactions of my very good friends with

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their families and I'd think God how bizarre! I mean our family was so tight and together. One of the things about survivors and their families mostly, usually, is that they are very tight knit. You always know that the family is there for you. The family is so important that you just know they are there for you. They may criticize you or they may not be happy about something, but ultimately you know they are there for you. I've seen other families that are so not like that. *It's* really bizarre.

AP: So in a way it's more of a positive impact.

PN: Correct. Correct, but then you have the other ones. I have friends whose parents never stop talking. You know every time they put a plate of food in front of them or they told them to go to school or they told them to study or wear a pair of shoes. You know they'd say I did'nt have this or I did that , but I know people whose parents who grew up in the Depression and they are exactly the same way. In tact, a very good friend of mine had an in-law who would constantly bring up the Depression and say things like "oh my God how could you do that, you know I grew up in the Depression" and on and on and my sister and I would talk about this person and go-hah-- you know it's the Depression and I'm sure it was awful but its certainly not anything worse than what our parents went through for five years in their life! Yet our parents didn't do that. So it varies.

Another thing about memory, we didn't know much about our family. However, what we did know about my parents was that they hadn't been married before the war, and they didn't have families before the war. I think quite often what I've found when I talked to second generation is that when they find out that there was a family that was killed, when they found out

that they had a sibling that they never knew about, then the memory becomes a little bit stronger and there is this feeling that they must live up to the memory of the sibling who didn't have a chance to live.

AP: Yes.

PN: That is something that recurs a lot.

AP: Trying to live up to what was lost.

PN: What was lost and there was a life that never lived.

AP: So there is more burden on the person?

PN: Exactly and that becomes what that burden is.

AP: Talking about how close knit your family is has brought another area of questioning to my mind. Do you think while raising your two children you brought to the table anything from your parents' experiences at the camps? Has your parents' experience affected the way you raised your children?

PN: I'm sure it has. You would probably have to talk to my kids about that.

AP: And I plan to!

PN: I know my older son [Joshua Brownstein] feels like he knows everything about the Holocaust. He doesn't need to know anymore about the Holocaust, which I find very interesting. My younger son [Aaron feels] a bit more about the miracle. He says quite often that he shouldn't be here, none of us should be here, but grandma and grandpa survived and so we are.

AP: Right.

PN: So he does feel like there is a purpose and he needs to find out whatever that purpose is. Of course, right now its rap music. (laughs)

AP: So again there seems to be a more positive impact.

PN: I think so. I'm sure there is some negative stuff in there. There always is. I think that we see a lot of it as a more positive thing and the negatives, at least in our family we like to call it the *mishegas,* the craziness, the little you know it's a little quirky you always have to wear socks and it's a little quirky that you can't eat a potato skin in front of my dad or you know just quirky you can't throw anything out. (laughs) It's not the worst thing, it's not the worst thing. Over all I think I got some pretty great parents which is a good thing.

AP: Then it has been a positive impact in the way you raised your children.

PN: I hope so.

AP: I have another question before we may have to switch sides on the tape. I often think of this about second generation and I know every person is different, but has it brought for you personally any emotional type issues that you are aware of?

PN: I'm perfectly normal! Well, at least I think I am, but again you know any of us that are nuts don't think we are crazy. (laughs) I'm sure it had brought some things, but again I like to look at the more positive, but I know many times I'm a very negative person I don't even realize it sometimes. I think that my parents, my mom especially, did bring some negativity into our family.

AP: From the event?

PN: Right. I guess I got to talk about some of the bad things too. It did bring some negativity. She questions everything. She is, you know, never sure if the decision is the right decision. Now whether or not that is just her or if it has to do with the fact that during the war she never knew what she was supposed to do or when she was supposed to do it ...

AP: Right, never knowing what to do because you could be punished, you could even be killed.

PN: And she does feel, you can sense, especially my mother, that no matter what she does it may not be the correct way to turn. There is some negativity and I do bring some of that in

unfortunately because my son [Aaron] said something to me the other day that in our family we never make a decision unless we tear it apart in five or six different ways and then we still are not real sure if we did it right. So you know that is one thing. I thought of something else and I just forgot. My mom always talked about bad luck, especially on Fridays. She just hates Fridays. Fridays are just awful. Bad things always happen on Fridays.

AP: Is that because the Nazis would usually punish Jews the most on Jewish holidays?

PN: Right. Right. That is when they knew everyone was home so that is when they would do the selections. They would go into the homes when they were in the ghettos and do the selections on Friday night when everybody was home. We didn't know about that when we were growing up. We just knew bad things happened on Fridays.

AP: Did you pick that up as well? Sometimes do you think oh its Friday?

PN: If something bad happens and it's Friday its like okay hopefully that's it. That could be a family quirky thing too. My mom was always afraid of large dogs and I found out later when she was in Plaszow [that] the commandant had those big dogs she used to see all the time.

AP: So do you ever find yourself afraid of large dogs?

PN: Well we always had dogs in our family, though they were small, and my son, my younger son, does have the biggest rotweiler you have ever seen who is gentle as can be and my mom and dad just love him. So that was something they were able to get beyond.

AP: Let's stop at this point so I can change tape. I don't want to run out and then lose it.

Tape 1/Side 2

AP: This is side two and we are interviewing Pepi Nichols on the 20th of October and we are continuing our conversation about the impact of being a second generation survivor. Another question I have comes from my research about the second generation. Where does this come in about blame. An issue of blame or accountability. Did your parents hate every German? Did they hate every Pole? How do you and your parents feel about Germany?

PN: Well I still wouldn't drive a Volkswagen.

AP: Well that says something. (laughs)

PN: That answers part of it. Growing up yes they didn't like German things and they wouldn't buy anything that was German. They hated the Poles with a passion. My parents didn't speak any Polish in the house as I was growing up. I found out since a few words would get mixed up with their Yiddish my dad spoke Yiddish at home because he was from a small town but my mom never spoke Yiddish until the camps and until the D.P. camps. So they spoke a little Yiddish at home and learned a lot of English because one of things about survivors that would

come to a community like Houston is that they had to assimilate much quicker with English and learn English than for instance in New York or Chicago, where there was a more Jewish neighborhood where they could get along with Yiddish. So they spoke a little Yiddish at home, lots of English, [but they] spoke no Polish. They hated the Poles.

They actually feel the Poles were more responsible than the Germans because my dad would say growing up in Sosnowiec was not a bad thing, you know he got beat up every now and then on the way home from school from the Polacks, but you know all in all it wasn't too bad. He had mostly fun. (laughs) My mother went to a public school. She went to school with Polish kids, had lots of Polish friends and that all changed, and then the Poles really turned them in and became huge collaborators with the Germans. They hated Poland and they would spit on Poland. 1 mean they just never had anything positive [about Poland]. Interestingly enough we did go back twice, first time, eight years ago.

AP: So you did go back to Europe with your parents?

PN: We did go back with my parents. It was my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary and we decided to go. My sister [Geri] wanted to go to Israel and she got it in her will that there was a very cheap flight to go to Poland and back and we asked our parents if they wanted to go and they first said no and then they thought about it and then said they would go. It turned out to be a very good positive experience.

AP: You went twice?

PN: We went back two years ago.

AP: So where did you go in the first trip?

PN: We went to Krakow and Warsaw and Sosnowiec. We went to all the places. We were able to go into the synagogue from Krakow were mom had gone when she was a little girl. So that good. We actually went into the apartment where she lived in. Krakow had not been destroyed, it is still standing, every bit of it is still standing. We actually went into the apartment where mother spent a good part of her life. So that was positive.

AP: One quick clarification. Was there any bitterness or tension or anger? Because from my understanding many Poles had stole Jews' homes. Did they steal it?

PN: Well this was an apartment you know we didn't want anything I mean she just wanted to see the place. I mean it had been redone and it didn't look the same.

AP: This is where she used to live and then somebody took it?

PN: Yeah, but you know its been fifty some odd years since that had happened.

AP: So it was a positive experience?

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PN: It was positive because we got to go in it and I think it felt good for her to go in there. It was also bad because a lot of it wasn't pretty, but I think all in all it was positive. We met some nice people. They asked her a lot of questions. Her Polish came back. No one could believe [it], she hadn't spoken it in fifty years. I mean she spoke beautiful Polish and people were always commenting on it. We went to the Havalkah, which was a very exclusive kind of delicatessen type restaurant in the center of town. It was a place that mom said she could never go as a little girl because it was very expensive.

AP: And it is still there?

PN: Its still there, so we went and had a wonderful lunch, so that was kind of fun (laughs.)

AP: This is on the first trip?

PN: On the first trip. And then we went to Sosnowiec.

AP: Which is near?

PJ: Not too far from Krakow. We went to Auschwitz too and we went to the camps. We went to Sosnowiec. It had been plowed over, but there was a little bitty street where my dad had grown up. There were a few houses and we found somebody. We actually knocked on the wrong door. We went and we knocked on the wrong door and these people welcomed us with *la 'chaim* [to

life] and insisted that we have a glass of wine with them and we started talking. My parents still talk to this couple all the time. They are a little bit younger than my parents.

AP: And they were Jews?

PN: They were not Jewish, Polish. They took us to a neighbor who was an old lady in her eighties who had always lived on that street and my dad asked the lady did you remember the Joskowitz? She looked at my dad and said "I had a tailor, he made me a coat." And my dad's father [Godol] was a tailor, so that ended up being positive. It was very good for my younger son [Aaron], who went with us. We went through Auschwitz and saw Auschwitz and Birkenau for the first time. So I think in all it was positive. My parents actually wanted to go back and we went back two years ago and went back and saw the couple again and just kind of traveled through Poland.

AP: So when ya'll went back two years ago what was the atmosphere there? Because many Poles and Germans want to close it, and if they could, tear down Auschwitz. I've read that many are just not wild about Jews going in to see the camps.

PN: Well you know it's a double-edged sword. First of all without us coming back their tourism wouldn't be as great as it is! So, actually you feel the underlying anti-Semitism and you do know that they know that you are Jewish, because you look quite a bit different. Most Americans that come are Jewish. You sense that they are aware and you don't know if they are talking under their breath or what is going on. On one hand you want to be there and the other

hand you don't want to really buy anything or give them money. When you go to an antique store and you see a candelabra you wonder, was that one stolen from someone's house? Are you obligated to buy it so it leaves that country and it stays with a Jewish family?

There is a whole new Jewish culture, especially in Krakow. I call it virtual Judaism. They have a Jewish theatre, and they have a Jewish klezmer band, and they have a Jewish kosher style restaurant and they have Jewish festivals. Of course there are no Jews there and there are no Jews in the klezmer band. But the Jewish culture, as long as there is a Jewish culture it is all wonderful as long you don't have any Jews to go along with it. So it's really kind of a weird.

AP: You only went to Poland, correct? Did you go to Terezin?

PN: We went to Theresienstadt, went to Prague, went to Germany, and went to Wannsee. We went all over. Germany is just awful and I just was not comfortable the whole time I was there, and I was born in Germany.

AP: What about Prague and Theresienstadt? I mean obviously your parents must have had emotions. 1 mean your mom was at Theresienstadt.

PN: My mom and my uncle.

AP: It must have been a strong emotional reaction. It was like a holding ghetto, many people starved and died there.

PN: It was very bizarre there. We went to Mauthausen. You know you go you tee! this reverence that people perished there. [I felt] very fortunate that my parents got out and that we are not living there. I mean I was born in Germany. I could still be in Germany and not be in America. I look at that all the time. Then you also have this sense, like when we were in Mauthausen. Mauthausen was built as actually a prison. So it's off the main road and you have to actually go to it and there is this fortress and it's pretty awful. It's was a terrible terrible camp. When we were leaving, and my son and I were leaving, Aaron sat on like a open area that is kind of fenced in and I went to hug him. He looked sad. Mauthausen was very hard plus we were there with a survivor that had been in Mauthausen. So it made it even harder and I went to give him a hug. I was looking over Aaron's shoulder and you know I'm aware that behind him there is this absolutely beautiful valley with cows and a house. A beautiful little brick house that had obviously been there forever and that's when you have this overwhelming sense of the people [who were] right there [the whole time]. How could they be farming and milking cows and living in this house when they had to be able to hear the torture of the Jews going up and down the stairs carrying these rocks [in a quarry] for no reason? Its just this weird horrible thing and you do drive around and you look at everybody and you wonder what they are thinking about you being Jewish and being there.

AP: That brings me to my next question. You went to Auschwitz which is where your mother was at for about six weeks. At Auschwitz did your parents have any feelings about it being preserved? It's a big debate amongst survivors because some want it totally preserved as it currently is, some want it to disappear, and some even want the gas chamber/crematoria rebuilt at Birkenau.

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PN: It has to stay. It has to stay as it is. You don't want it all whitewashed and painted over because you want to still be able to see all the awful stains and things that are there. But as you go through Birkenau and even though most of it is gone you can still see those chimneys as far as you can walk. You can see the remnants of the barracks as far as the eye can see and the enormity of it is something that you don't have any clue from a picture and it has to be there. Even if it is just walking through the graves. You know, it needs to be there. I think it's important because as long as its there it can stop some of the denial and we know there are deniers out there.

AP: Is there anything additional you can think of as far as an impact on your life? Is there anything else you would like to mention?

PN: Like I said earlier I like to see a lot of the positives that my parents gave me and my family. I think [of the trauma they went through]. Everyone is now a survivor even if it's just a little fire. Everyone is a survivor now. Interestingly, my parents are always saying, "you know if something happens to a Jew all of the sudden the whole world needs to take it over." You know it used to be Jews [who]were put in ghettos, now you know everybody has got a ghetto. They [survivors of the Holocaust] used to be called a survivor, now everybody is a "survivor."

You know something that was coined by the Jewish people is now being taken over by everybody, but nowadays they see people with all kinds of trauma that has gone on generation after generation. You are not going to be able to take everything that has been in your life and remove it and not carry it forward.

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I think that all in all for two people who went through horrible horrible experiences for years, not for one day out of their lives but for years, who lost all of their family except for one brother, lost their home, lost their country, came to a country with nothing, had to learn new language, had to learn a new way of life, had to make new friends, and had to raise kids at a time where they didn't even really understand about raising children because they really lost their youth. To be able to even function and to be able hold down jobs and buy nice little groceries

and raise the kids and help me raise my boys. I think that's an amazing thing. [Of course] some of the survivors did not come through that trauma well. [Some victims] maybe lost their entire family including their husband , wife , and children. They had a harder time being able to start all over a again.

AP: Right.

PN: You know their children are going to have more trauma. But there were no psychiatrists then. There were no people to tell the survivors anything. The survivors were told "oh just don't worry about it, forget it, you know forget it and move on with your lives."

AP: And it wasn't discussed ?

PN: No, and I have done quite a Few oral histories here at the Holocaust Museum and I've interviewed a few survivors who I've known my whole life because they were friends of my parents. They never discussed it even among themselves what happened to each other, what they went through.

So, you know like I said I like to see the positives. I think that there were definitely were some trauma issues that I'm sure were brought forward, I'm a little quirky myself sometimes. think all in all I'm very amazed that my parents were able to do what they had been able to.

AP: There has also got to be this generational gap or shift in the Jewish sense. I mean the Europe your parents grew up with was a different kind of place-the Jews had a different kind of mentality than a generation later.

PN: Oh definitely.

AP: So do you kind of ever feel that gap? Do your parents ever express like a different kind of thought about being a Jew than today's Jews? Today's Jews have a powerful kind of activism with A.I.P.A.C. [The American Israel Public Affairs Committee] and Israel.

PN: Absolutely. Israel is everything. I mean Israel is everything. Israel represents more than just a Jewish homeland. It represents a home that they now have. If anything God forbid were ever to happen, they know they would be welcome. You know too that the survivors were not welcome. They were not welcome in their country, they weren't welcome in America, they weren't welcome in England, and nobody wanted them. They had no place to go. Quite often, you know people would say, "Why did you stay? Why didn't you leave? You knew what was going on." Well, they had no clue what was going on. Even if they had, and even if people did try to get out you couldn't get out. There was no place to go. Your own neighbors, your dear

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friends, the Poles, the Dutch, the French would turn you in for a little sugar and salt and whatever . There was no place to go. So Israel is absolutely very important.

In 1967 with the war was an absolute wonderful wonderful thing, as far as showing that Israel and Jews could really stand up to the world and you get that when you go to Israel. You see that one of the good things and bad things about Israelis is that they are not going to bow down to anybody and they are going to take care of their own and no one is going to tell them to leave again. That certainly is a mentality that stems back from the Holocaust.

AP: So your parents must also be very strongly Zionists?

PN: Oh yeah. Actually my mother, my uncle [Sol], and I'm sure my dad too but then again he was from the shtetl, was very Zionistic growing up. And was very big. Like I said, my first cousin [Eliezer Storch] was the only cousin who survived [the Holocaust] by going to Palestine before the war. He [was part of] the very first Zionist movement. So, [they were] very very strong Zionists. Mother was just talking the other day and was so excited because the noble peace prizes came out and almost all the winners were Jewish. (laughs)

AP: I mean your parents, for obvious reasons, are the ones in society who feel the strongest desire to have Israel. Are you at all ever fearful that the anti-Semitism will return?

PN: It's not a 100 percent gone. I mean if you talk to people in other countries its not 100 percent gone.

AP: What is not being 100 percent gone?

PN: The tears.

AP: Fears of being persecuted?

PN: Yeah, that's not 100 percent gone. Yes, after the Holocaust I think that, especially after the creation of Israel, the Jews of the world said we are not going to let this happen again. People are not going to push us around again. We are going to stand up for ourselves. It wasn't an easy thing, and it still isn't 100 percent. In the 1950s with McCarthyism it still was there. The Jews were quiet, they were afraid to say anything in the United States.

AP: Anti-Semitism appears on the rise. Do you feel it is spreading too quickly as of late?

PN: Right, and certainly that anti-Semitism has changed in the last couple of years. As second generation I've always felt that anti-Semitism can happen anywhere. It is happening again, but it is something many of my friends, my American friends, would laugh [at, for it] could never happen again and it could never happen here.

AP: Well that's what they said fifty years ago.

PN: The second generation I would say, though I don't like to speak for the whole group, are always aware that it could happen again. [It's always] in the back of your head. And you do

notice anti-Semitism more and we do notice anti-Israel stances are really anti-Semitic stances and so we have always been more aware in our existence. Even here in America it is still there and things can still happen.

AP: Well thanks for joining us and sharing your experience.

PN: Your welcome!

Note: After the interview, Pepi Nichols stated that there were two additional issues she wanted to mention. She asserts all second-generation survivors have a very strong work ethic because their parents had to work hard so they would not be killed. Also, Holocaust survivors tend to feel that the only thing that could not be taken away from them in the camps was their education. Thus, second generation families pride themselves in getting a good education.

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