

A V I R T U A L A T T I C

In 2014, as Suze and I prepared to move to an apartment from our home in Connecticut, the challenge of what to do with the contents of all those trunks, boxes, and files in the attic and garage loomed large. The collection of letters, photos, articles, tapes, notebooks, and memorabilia of one kind or another went as far back as early in the twentieth century from her side of the family, my side, and our decades together.

Eventually, a plan was developed. Some of the material went to archives at alma maters, some were converted to CDs and digital files, some are still crammed in boxes in closets. Books and vinyl records went to interested libraries.

A good many of these items in a variety of formats will be available on a website we have developed called anespeciallygoodview.com in what is a virtual attic. A sample of that material follows in this appendix featuring things related to the book.

What is not there are thousands of emails we've sent because these were mostly deleted and what remains is too fleeting in thought and cursory in topic as to be of any real use.

And that is the point of the virtual attic. In the future will we have as much to preserve as we have in the past? Will we have handwritten letters, photos on shiny stock of childhood, family, holidays, pets, and travel? Certainly, there will be much less to save. The shared history that was in those trunks, boxes, and files will have to be assembled in other ways, which will not be an easy task.

Technology and the urge to remember will certainly devise ways to take account of our lives. After all, humans have come a long way from cave paintings. But for now, let's preserve what we have in the best way possible, which is by scanning, copying, and linking, and to the extent we can, put them on computers, in safe places at home, or long-term storage.

The site, anespeciallygoodview.com, will have links to a variety of places where pictures and words can be found, including YouTube, Flickr, and Medium .com by searching under the Osnos name.



SECOND LOOKS

In recent years and especially while working on this book, I have visited and written about many of the places that were meaningful in my life. These were Bombay (now Mumbai), Poland, Britain, Vietnam, Cambodia, Russia, and Israel. None of those trips fundamentally changed my understanding of those places. But the passage of time and twists of history enhanced my judgments about them. I wrote pieces about all these trips for what I called *Peter Osnos's Platform* on the Medium site and then posted them on social media. I called the writing “brain exercise” because they were a way to use my thoughts beyond simply holding forth to family and friends. I also wanted to explore how social media worked. There are many more pieces there than in this collection, all of which can be read in full. What are they? Essays? Articles? Blogs? Does it matter what they are called?



I was born in Bombay but had never been back until 2019, when Suze and I took our teenage grandsons, Ben and Peter, on a weeklong visit with the objective of re-creating as nearly as we could the experiences of my parents and brother from the summer of 1940 until the end of 1943, when they left on the USS *Hermitage*. We saw the hospital where I was born, the apartment houses where my family lived (even meeting a ninety-nine-year-old neighbor named “Auntie Nora”), the sites where they worked, and the school in Panchgani that Robert attended. India had welcomed Józef, Marta, and Robert—and eventually me as well. It is a country so vast that the point of our tiny measure of gratitude to the Indians and colonial-era British is that if you desperately need to acclimate—and if your hosts permit you to—the odds are that you’ll be okay even very far from home.

I wrote an article about a 2018 visit to Warsaw and Krakow titled “There’s Something About Poland.” What that meant was that my attraction to my parents’ homeland surpassed the reality that they had to flee to avoid anti-Semitism and certain execution by the Nazis. Warsaw today rivals other European cities for sass and class, but that urbanity coexists with religious and social conservatism that has been present throughout the country’s history. There are many books about the “Polish Problem” of living between Russia and Germany, the neighboring nations that have overwhelmed Poland in the past. Perhaps that is why the Polish language is replete with ironic imagery that reflects its people’s wariness about the future of their state.

My years of living in London, as I've written, made me an Anglophile, a friendly critic. With Winston as one of my middle names, that was probably pre-ordained.

Vietnam and Cambodia, two countries that suffered the brutal consequences of American intervention in their internal political order, have rebounded in impressive ways, even if neither country comes close to the standards of liberal democracy. I can attest that more than forty years after the wars that annihilated much of their populations, their recovery has restored time-honored strengths of character and beauty.

I was last in Russia just after the millennium to meet with Boris Yeltsin about his book. Russia today has a personality compatible with its history. It is again an autocracy, with enormous inequality and a largely controlled public across the vastness of a land spanning twelve time zones. There is a youth culture connected to Western styles that in the future may turn out to be important. For now, I say you can take communism out of Russia, but you can't take the Russians out of Russia.

I've made a number of visits to Israel, most recently a decade ago for the wedding of Natan and Avital's daughter. The Sharanskys now have six grandchildren. The land of Israel has never been a placid place and is not now. I've written about my concerns over how the politics of the country have developed. Yet after visiting Auschwitz in 2018 and seeing the remnants of the hundreds of thousands of Jews executed there, I have a better sense of why so many Israelis take the position of "Never Again."

Suze and I went to China and Egypt when Evan was working there and visited Nepal while Katherine was a student in Kathmandu. We had a family trek through the Himalayas to celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary. All these destinations qualify as enlightening. The only way to appreciate the complexity of human beings is to see how they live and cope.

The full text of all these pieces and more as far back as 2008 can be found at [Medium.com](https://medium.com/@peterosnos) under Peter Osnos, [TheAtlantic.com](https://www.theatlantic.com), or [TheDailyBeast.com](https://www.thedailybeast.com).

