

# One Day ... in my life

Briton Alison Chester came to Bali on holiday in 1982 and three years later returned to the island, this time meeting her future husband, Riyanto Samadi, whom she married in 1987. After settling down here, Alison started a fabric-manufacturing business at the beginning of a new life that would take on surprising directions, including running an orphanage in Bali and building kindergartens in earthquake-devastated Central Java. The 55-year-old mother of two girls – both now married, to Westerners, and living in Bali – shared her day with The Bali Times' Indra Prayogi

“ The birds are chirping in the trees when I wake at 5:30 in the morning. I like to get up early rather than lying in bed doing nothing. With my head already full of plans for the day, I do some gentle stretching exercises before having a shower and a cup of coffee. Yanto, my wonderful husband, has made for me. I feel really lucky to have a husband like him. It's great living in Canggu (North Kuta) because the air is so fresh and that's why I love the early mornings.

Yanto and I talk for a while about things, about the orphanage and what it needs and other things, like our fabric business. We have 60 staff now and Yanto's sister manages it because I can't be there every day. I'll do some emailing before heading to the office.

The first Bali bombing (October 12, 2002) changed my life. I found out at 4am the next morning and one of my daughters said I should go down to Sanglah Hospital and help out. I phoned BIMC

(Bali International Medical Centre) and was told to go down, and that's what I did.

One of the victims I met there was Jodie O'Shea; she was from Australia. I took care of her in hospital until she was transferred to Australia for more intensive medical treatment because she was suffering from about 80-percent burns, and, I later found out, internal injuries. She was the most amazing human being. One night a nurse came in with a painkiller for her – there had been a shortage of painkillers up to then – and Jodie said to give it to someone

everything; about her life; her family, and how she was especially close to her mother; her dog-grooming business – I've got dogs so we talked a lot about that. We didn't really discuss the bombing, because she was in such a bad state that I don't think she really realized what had happened to her.

Two days after Jodie left, my cellphone rang and I was told she had died. I just cried and cried. I still find it hard to talk about her. There were three people in her ward at Sanglah and all of them died.

Jodie's parents sent me her earrings and asked me to keep them. Friends of mine sent me money, asking me to do anything I could with it, and at first Yanto

them, especially Yanto.

All the children go to school, and some to university. Each has their own sponsor, who supports them financially and who get progress reports from me. Sometimes the sponsors come to the orphanage and take their child out for a while.

Most of the children are from the island of Sumba; only a few are from Bali. Conditions in Sumba are not so good compared to here and that's why we decided to focus on kids from there.

Often my days are so busy I don't have time to stop for lunch, but I love what I do so I don't mind. In the last few months, in conjunction with Manusia untuk Masyarakat (People for the Community) and generous donors, we've started building four kindergartens in Bantul in Yogyakarta, where Yanto was born, and we're going to build more. The Czech model Petra Nemcova is involved in the project and has contributed funds. She was at the opening of the first completed kindergarten this week.

I don't mind if I'm stuck in a traffic jam or bouncing around the potholed small roads as I head home around 5pm – the magnificent views of the ricefields more than make up for any discomfort.

After a quick check of emails, Yanto and I sit down for dinner – I love everything except for shellfish but my favorite is Indian. Just before turning in for the night around 10 I'll do some more emailing – writing to friends and potential sponsors who want to help.



JODIE O'SHEA WAS THE MOST AMAZING HUMAN BEING.

and I tried to give some cash to the bombing victims, but they already had so much from other people. It was around then that I came up with the idea of helping orphans. We helped some in Denpasar first and in 2003 set up our own place – the Jodie O'Shea Orphanage.

Jodie's parents were very happy to hear about what we had done and sent funds from their friends and relatives. Right now we have a total of 21 children, from 8 to 19 years of age. They're not exactly orphans because they have at least one parent, but they're from families that are so terribly, terribly poor that they cannot look after them,

## The Dish on Bali

With Bali Times Diarist Diana Shearin  
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### Thumbs Up

To the generosity of the parents and friends of the Canggu Community School for raising Rp10 million towards the fantastic Bantul Kindergarten Project in Yogyakarta. Initiated by tireless humanitarian and charity worker Alison Chester, the money will go towards rebuilding schools for hundreds of young kids affected by the devastating earthquake in May. Czech model Petra Nemcova visited the project last week to lend a voice to the worthy project.



All Smiles: Top Czech model Petra Nemcova chats with local children in Bantul, Central Java, during a visit on Monday at the launch of the first facility of The Bantul Kindergarten Project, which is building kindergartens in the area after the devastating earthquake in the region in May that left about 6,000 people dead. Nemcova was badly injured in Thailand during the December 2004 tsunami and lost her boyfriend in the disaster.