

# Forty Delicious Years 1974 - 2014

Murni's Warung, Ubud, Bali



Jonathan Copeland  
Rob Goodfellow  
Peter O'Neill



Top left: Murni, Tooth-filing, Ubud, 1992; right: Murni's aunt, Murni sitting, her mother to her right, the rest are neighbours, *Kuningan Day*, Denpasar, 1954.

Middle: Murni, her grandmother, a neighbour and Murni's aunt, Ubud, 1992;

right above: Murni and her mother, Ubud, 1992;

right below: Murni, Sanur, circa 1971.

Bottom: Murni, Sanur, circa 1967; middle and right: Murni, Sanur, circa 1971.

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Murni's Warung, Ubud, Bali:  
From Toasted Sandwiches to  
Balinese Smoked Duck

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Orchid Press

FORTY DELICIOUS YEARS 1974 TO 2014

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Compiled by Jonathan Copeland, Rob Goodfellow & Peter O'Neill

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# Foreword

I've been travelling to Bali for over twenty-five years now—a neophyte compared with some of our contributors—but from first landing I knew that it was a place replete with magic and a sort of magnetic power, the kind that would draw me back again and again. Somehow, though, through all of those years and visits, right up until about five years ago, I managed to miss out on one of the island's crown jewels—Ibu Murni.

That changed when I was approached by Jonathan Copeland in 2008 about the possibility of publishing his and Murni's wonderful book, *Secrets of Bali*. Jonathan had put on his 'lawyerly' cloak during the contract discussions and there were times, I confess, when I wondered just how well we would work together. I've long believed that if a project, publishing or otherwise, was not fun, then it was generally not worth undertaking, no matter the prospective rewards...



*Murni's Warung, 2014*

Once we concluded an agreement though, Jonathan's disguise quickly came off, and to my relief and good fortune, he and Murni turned out to be two of the most graceful, amiable and accommodating authors I have worked with—a relationship that soon evolved into a warm friendship as well.

Jonathan, Rob and Peter originally invited me to contribute to one of the forty 'courses' the reader will enjoy below, a task that I felt I was really not qualified for, in the face of so many who have known Murni for decades—much as I share their feelings and impressions of this remarkable lady.

I'm thus delighted to be able to contribute my own accolades to Murni in the role of publisher of this volume, that I am sure will be enjoyed by all who have met her, and many more who have yet to experience that pleasure.

And last and most importantly, my wife, Lily, and I would like to offer our own personal blessings to Ibu Murni on the wonderful occasion of this anniversary, and to wish her many, many more to come.

Chris Frape  
Publisher, Orchid Press,  
January 2014

# Preface



*Murni's Warung, 1979*

It is with an enormous sense of disbelief that I am sitting here and writing these words. It is quite incredible to me that I started *Murni's Warung* with a bowl of soup and a sandwich forty years ago. I wasn't a cook and had no knowledge of what Western food was. I had no business plan, no mission statement, and no spreadsheets. I didn't have electricity or a fridge or an electric oven. I didn't have staff or suppliers or a car.

I did have passion and drive and energy. And I had friends and customers and hard work. Luckily *Murni's Warung* grew and prospered and has been able to serve food and drink to thousands of people these forty years. I hope that my guests have enjoyed it. Of course, it was not just me, although it was just me at the very beginning, along with my two cousins. From very early on I was able to employ people, some of whom are still working with me at *Murni's Warung*, and it goes without saying

that I am very grateful to all of them for their help, friendship and kindness.

*Murni's Warung* is probably as famous for its location as for its food. It is built on a gorge above the River Wos, a river which is sacred to the Balinese. It has been part of my life, going back more than forty years. When I was a very young child of five or six, I played and bathed down there at the river and among the rocks. When I was older, I helped carry rocks up from the river bed to the road for construction use. Later still, after my parents split up, I secretly met my mother below the bridge. I never dreamed that I would be able to buy part of the gorge, live there and go to sleep to the sound of the sacred river crashing over the rocks.

*Murni's Warung* would be nothing, however, without its guests. It's impossible to know how many have passed through the doors since 1974, but it's hundreds of thousands. Peter Wetzel (1948-2002) was one dear friend, who took the photograph of the *Warung* in 1979. Many come back again and again. Many have become lasting and dear friends. They have come from all corners of the World, and they are still coming and I thank them all.

I am very touched by the recollections of the forty guests for forty years, set out in this book, which I shall treasure for the rest of my life. I hope that you enjoy reading their stories.

Murni

Ubud, Bali

[www.murnis.com](http://www.murnis.com)

# *About Ibu Murni*



*Ibu Murni*

Murni was born in Penestanan, a few minutes' walk from Ubud. As a very young girl, in the 1950's, she lived in Denpasar, selling breakfast snacks before she went to school.

During the 1960's she was back in Ubud, living with her mother in Ubud market, and learning the trade.

By the early 1970's she owned four shops on Sanur beach and had founded *Murni's Warung*, her famous restaurant, in Campuhan-Ubud, and was on the way to becoming one of the most famous people in Bali.

She built *Murni's Houses*, accommodation for guests, and three shops in Ubud in the 1980's, and began to travel extensively.

Throughout the 1990's she developed and designed *Murni's Villas* in a quiet village in the hills about 15-20 minutes' outside Ubud.

During all this time she was busy collecting and becoming an expert on Asian antiques and textiles and many of them are to be found in *Murni's Warung Shop* beside the restaurant.

In 2007 and 2009 she exhibited part of her collection at the prestigious shows in San Francisco and gave a lecture on Balinese textiles to the Asian Arts Council at the *de Young Museum*.

*Secrets of Bali, Fresh Light on the Morning of the World* by Jonathan Copeland and Ni Wayan Murni was published in 2010; now in its second print run, it may be purchased in fine bookshops in Bali and around the region. It is also available as an ebook on [www.murnis.com](http://www.murnis.com).

*Murni's Very Personal Guide to Ubud* by Ni Wayan Murni and photographs by Jonathan Copeland was published in October 2011 and is available as an ebook on [www.murnis.com](http://www.murnis.com) and elsewhere.

*From Tattoos to Textiles, Murni's Guide to Asian Textiles, All You Need to Know... And More* by Ni Wayan Murni and Jonathan Copeland was published in October 2013 and is available as an ebook on [www.murnis.com](http://www.murnis.com) and elsewhere.

Her latest venture, *Tamarind Spa at Murni's Houses*, is intended to bring all these aspects of Balinese art, luxury and culture together in one healing experience.

# *40 Main Courses*

# Memories of Murni



*Karen Goodman*

I lived in Bali for nearly two years in the late 1970's. I was working on a film as part of a college senior thesis. Living in Pengosekan, Penestanan and Sayan, *Murni's Warung* was THE place.

Actually, I believe it was the only place of its kind at that time on the entire island. Here, travellers, adventurers, wanderers, students, researchers and those of us who had extended our stays in Indonesia and just needed to escape to the cool highlands of central Bali, would gather for a cold beer or a mixed juice and a scrumptious meal and always there was lovely and engaging company. Murni, with her effervescent smile and her welcoming staff of lovely young ladies, became our friends and were always part of the lively conversation amongst us.

More than just a place to eat, *Murni's Warung* felt like the best clubhouse in the Universe; a special place for a refreshing drink or a candlelight evening of camaraderie before wandering home through the moonlit rice fields.

**Karen Goodman** is a Manhattan-based Academy Award winning documentary filmmaker (*Strangers No More*, 2010.) In addition to three other Oscar nominations and a number of Emmy awards, she is the recipient of the Dupont-Columbia Award for Independent Programming (*Buckminster Fuller: Thinking Out Loud*, 1996.) She made her first documentary, *Light of Many Masks* (1981), in Bali. [www.simon-goodmanpictures.com](http://www.simon-goodmanpictures.com).

# My Oldest Friend in Bali



*Professor Michael Hitchcock*

It was on trips to Ubud with my Indonesian sponsor, the late and renowned Professor Dr. I Gusti Ngurah Bagus, that I had my first introduction to Murni's wonderful food. In 1980, Bali's Udayana University had kindly sponsored my research in Bima, on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa, and so it was necessary for me to pop back to Bali from time to time and it was on these occasions that Bapak Bagus would take me with him to Ubud. I eventually ended staying there on many occasions and thus became a regular at *Murni's Warung*. And it really was a *warung* in those days: it was small and welcoming and the menus were always being modified to take account of what ingredients were in season—and so the food was invariably fresh.

Murni was also a fantastic host, providing sparkling conversation and invaluable insights into the culture of Bali and life in Ubud. I also quickly learned that Murni had another side to her and that we both shared a strong interest in the arts and crafts. She could quickly grasp the aesthetic value of whatever she looked at. To my delight, I also found that her range was (and still is) not limited to Indonesian artefacts but extends to nearby countries such as Thailand, Malaysia and Burma. In fact, as I have discovered, Murni has a strong interest in a very wide variety of artistic forms, especially Indonesian textiles. So, it is not just food and a good time that you get at *Murni's Warung*, but a complete sensual experience that embraces all forms of material and visual culture. Murni and I hit it off from the outset and we quickly became good friends; I have just realized in writing this that she is my oldest friend in Bali.

**Professor Michael Hitchcock** is Dean of the Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism at Macau University of Science and Technology (formerly the Academic Director and Dean of the IMI University Centre in Lucerne). On completion of his doctorate at the University of Oxford in 1983, he began his professional career teaching in higher education in the UK. Following six years at the University of Hull, he was appointed Professor of Tourism at the University of North London in 1995 and a Centenary Professor the following year. In 2000 he was appointed Director of the International Institute for Culture, Tourism and Development at London Metropolitan University and in 2008 he became Deputy Dean at the University of Chichester. He has written and edited fourteen books, many on Indonesia, as well as many other published outputs. Professor Hitchcock is originally from the UK, but he has lived in Germany, the Netherlands and Indonesia and has taught on British Council funded programmes in Malaysia, Tanzania, Ghana and India.

# The Place



## *Jero Asri Kerthyasa*

It was December 1977 and I again found myself in Bali, having resigned from my job, ready to spend three well-deserved months in paradise. Little did I know that I would, in fact, spend the rest of my life here!

My husband and I built our house and a small homestay *Tjetjak Inn* in Campuhan. Life was simple in those days. We had no electricity, no running water, no refrigeration and no telephone. Every day and all day, we ate simple Balinese food. We were young and money was tight. For a Sydney girl swapping city life for village life, it sounds romantic but the truth is that it was hard to turn back the clock and live without modern comforts and conveniences. I yearned for food from home. I couldn't even light the kerosene stove we cooked on!

I vividly remember the joy of going to *Murni's Warung*, especially when the going got tough. It was my haven, my escape. In those days they had a mouthwateringly delicious creation called 'the Upper Elk

Valley Burger'. Imagine! And it was heaven! I had found a special place where I would recharge my 'Western batteries'. What joy! When our first child was born, I would take him for a walk and for some reason we always ended up at *Murni's Warung*. I think I had the first stroller in Bali, and I would strap Tjok De in and set off down our dirt path and onto the 'main road' which was little more than a track too. There he would sit contently while I got my 'fix'.

In those days, the seating was at street level and we would sit with an elbow on the windowsill watching the passing parade—ducks, bicycles, women with baskets of vegetables, the very odd car which was usually an old Chevy and then farmers returning from their fields. The old bridge was then the only bridge and traffic was minimal. I remember buying a hand-made book called *Method of Flute Playing*, lovingly handwritten and illustrated by Roda and purchased, accordingly, through the window.

When my parents came to visit, their first port of call was always at *Murni's*. When they were paying I added my favourite Planter's Punch to the order... and always an Upper Elk Valley Burger. While they were visiting, we would often walk over to *Murni's*, torch in hand, for dinner. On the way home we would catch fireflies and fill our pockets with them.

Murni and Pat were always there and their daughter, Morny, and our son, Tjok Gde, were of similar age. It was fun to hang out there. It was 'the hub'. It was where you saw the other expatriates in town and caught up on all the gossip.

Sometimes, cheesecake was on the menu. This could only happen when Murni's friends would bring Philadelphia Cream Cheese from Australia. You had to be quick though; it was very popular and supplies were intermittent. Other favourites were the chocolate chip cookies, the *brem* (rice wine) with ice and lemon, *lumpia* (spring rolls) to die for and the cakes... my goodness the cakes. *Murni's Warung* was THE place in those slower, simpler days.

To this day my mother, now in her late 80s, cannot come to Bali without enjoying at least 'a few meals' at *Murni's*. The walk there is