



Someone Else's Country: Living In Suharto's Indonesia

Shirley Fenton Huie

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It's never easy living in someone else's country, but the trials of adapting to a new climate, an alien culture and an unfamiliar language are usually outweighed by the camaraderie of expatriate life and the rich rewards of experiencing another culture first-hand. Australian Shirley Fenton Huie spent most of her marriage to helicopter pilot Ed Fenton following him from one foreign country to another while raising four children and coping with the hazards of living in remote areas. In 1972, Shirley and two of her children joined Ed in the wild, frontier town of Balikpapan on the east coast of Indonesian Borneo and spent the next decade living in the rapidly developing country of Indonesia under the rule of President Suharto. In this biographical account of that time, Shirley recalls her experiences of the best and worst this extraordinary country had to offer. In Balikpapan, she learned to cope with the extreme heat and isolation, wild animals, ghosts and curious local customs while building a house nestled between the beach and the untamed jungle. A move to the Chinese businessmen's town of Semarang in Central Java brought the relative comforts of civilisation and a lifelong friendship with the renowned Affandi family of artists - as well as encounters with an often-corrupt bureaucracy and the brutal reality of life under a military dictatorship. Shirley's final years in Indonesia were spent on the holiday island of Bali, but the triumph of establishing a thriving pub business and building her dream house in this island paradise were threatened by black magic, betrayal and death. Through it all, Shirley conveys her love for the Indonesian people and her passion for their culture, as well as the strength and sense of humour that helped her survive in this turbulent period of Indonesia's history.

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