

EILEEN CADDY 1917-2006

co-founder of the Findhorn Foundation Community

Eileen Caddy, who died last week aged 89, was one of the three founders of the Findhorn Foundation spiritual community in Scotland. She was a mystic, a spiritual teacher and the author of books containing the simple, yet profound guidance she received from an inner source she called 'the God within'. Her life's work was to turn others within to find their own sources of inner guidance. A humble and shy woman, Eileen accepted her role as an inspiration to spiritual seekers worldwide without a hint of self-aggrandisement or glamour.

She was born Eileen Marion Jessop in Alexandria, Egypt, on 26th August 1917, where her Irish father, Albert, was director of Barclays Bank DCO. Her mother, Muriel, was English. Eileen was the second of four siblings, and at six years old left Egypt for school in Ireland. Later she attended boarding schools in England, at which she was largely unhappy and a slow scholar.

Her early religious background was minimal. Her father was no churchgoer, and Eileen only attended when staying with an Irish aunt. Though she loved reading the Bible, and felt the stirrings of spiritual yearning, the church didn't attract her and she declined to be confirmed.

When Eileen was sixteen her father died of peritonitis, and she returned to Egypt to help her mother. They moved to England in 1934 and a year later her mother died of meningitis. At nineteen she enrolled in domestic college, and purchased a roadhouse with her brother Paddy, close to an RAF base in Oxfordshire. This brought Eileen into contact with RAF officers, one of whom, Andrew Combe, proposed to her. They were married on 13th May 1939.

Eileen was later to say she was "never in love with Andrew, but I did love him." A son, Richard, and four daughters, Jenny, Mary-Elizabeth, Suzanne and Penny, were born to the couple between 1940 and 1951. After spending the war years in London they moved to America, first to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, then to Maxwell Fields, Alabama, and in 1951 to Habbaniyah, Iraq, then under British dominion.

Andrew was a member of Moral Re-Armament, the spiritual organisation founded by Frank Buchman. He insisted Eileen join too and she was obliged to attend meetings and participate in 'quiet times', during which the group would listen inwardly for divine 'guidance'. Eileen never heard anything but pretended to in order "to avoid having my inner world investigated" by the others.

In 1952 Andrew introduced Eileen to Peter Caddy, an energetic fellow officer who became a frequent visitor to the family. Peter was fascinated by occult matters, and in their talks Eileen heard for the first time about reincarnation, mediums, spiritual healers and other then-esoteric subjects.

When Andrew was posted to Britain in 1953, Eileen and the children moved back first to set up home. Peter accompanied them, and shortly after arriving in London Eileen fell in love with him. She wrote to Andrew requesting a divorce. Andrew returned angrily to England, took the children, and forbade Eileen to contact them again.

In despair at losing her family, and newly in love with a man she barely understood, Eileen went with Peter to the town of Glastonbury, where they visited a private sanctuary. As Eileen prayed for help she heard a voice inside her head say:

Be still and know that I am God. You have taken a very big step in your life, but if you follow My voice, all will be well. I have brought you and Peter together for a very special purpose, to do specific work for Me. You will work as one, and you will realise this more fully as time goes on. There are few who have been brought together in this way. Don't be afraid, for I am with you.

Eileen thought she was going crazy, but, encouraged by Peter, she accepted this inner voice as a source of divine wisdom. This proved to be the turning point of her life. The voice continued to communicate with her, reassuring and guiding her in a tone of loving fatherly wisdom, and using gently biblical language. One of its first instructions was that Peter's wife Sheena, with whom he no longer lived as man and wife, but who he regarded as his spiritual teacher, was to be Eileen's teacher too. Eileen's relationship with Sheena was a difficult one, but Sheena taught Eileen the lesson of spiritual discipline, insisting she meditate daily without fail at 9 am, noon and 6 pm, for her "appointments with God".

Peter resigned from the RAF and his and Eileen's first son, Christopher, was born in March 1955. With the exception of a brief reunion, Eileen was still estranged from her other five children, and for the next two years endured a confused existence, following Peter through a succession of low level jobs in various locations round the British Isles. Their second son, Jonathan was born in June 1956.

That autumn Peter and Eileen followed Sheena to Scotland, where Sheena was gathering a small following. A controversy about a "woman messiah" and her group (dubbed "the nameless ones" by the press) ensued in the Scottish newspapers, and for several months in early 1957 Sheena and her followers, including Peter and Eileen, were front page news.

In March 1957 Peter applied for the job of manager of the large Cluny Hill Hotel in Forres. He and Eileen, who was now divorced from Andrew, got married. They left Sheena's circle, and with another of Sheena's ex-followers, Dorothy Maclean, went to run Cluny Hill. They managed the hotel using the guidance Eileen now received constantly from her inner voice; every aspect of its management from the allocation of guest rooms to the choice of staff uniforms. A favourite story involved the chef of the hotel, Charles, who collapsed drunk one evening without having finished cooking the meal. When Peter went desperately to Eileen to get instruction, the inner voice told them:

Give Chef another whisky.

They did, Charles miraculously rallied, and the meal was served.

With this unorthodox help, and notwithstanding a few newspaper reports about "the heavenly hotel", Peter and Eileen made Cluny Hill a success and it was raised from three- to four-star status. Their third son, David, was born there in January 1958. After five seasons they were transferred to the gloomy Trossachs Hotel in central Scotland. Eileen's guidance assured them they would return to Cluny Hill, and when the season ended they hoped to be transferred back. Unexpectedly, however, and without explanation, Peter was fired. They found themselves out of work, with nowhere to go except their holiday caravan, parked by the beach at the village of Findhorn, 5 miles from Forres.

On 17th November 1962 they towed their caravan to the only available location: a hollow by a rubbish dump at the Findhorn Bay Caravan Park.

Peter, Eileen and their three boys live in the caravan on this spot for the next seven years. Subsisting on Peter's unemployment benefit was hard, so in the sandy ground outside the caravan they began a vegetable garden. Dorothy Maclean joined them, and the three adults maintained a disciplined daily meditation practice. Dorothy discovered in her meditations that she could contact the overlighting spirits of plants, also known as devas. She received precise instructions for the garden from them which Peter, ever the man of action, put into practice. The results were startling and in a year the Caddys produced an impossibly abundant garden. Within three years the garden was famous, attracting soil experts and horticulturalists who were stumped by how 3 people with no gardening experience could grow giant vegetables and fruits in a windy corner of north-east Scotland on semi-barren land. When pressed for an explanation, Peter cannily put it down to a "factor x", only going public with the story of their innovative cooperation with nature in 1969.

Living with five others in a cramped caravan Eileen found it difficult to find peace for her meditations. She asked for guidance and received this reply:

Why don't you go down to the public toilets? You will find perfect peace there.

Eileen was aghast, but obeyed, and for several years she walked nightly to the public toilet block, whatever the weather, to have her five hours of 'quiet time' with God.

Soon the Caddys were joined by other like-minded souls and the settlement began to grow into a fledgling community. In 1966 Peter began distributing monthly pamphlets of Eileen's guidance, attributed to her spiritual pen-name Elixir, and titled *God Spoke To Me*, to friends and contacts round the world.

In 1968 Peter built a sanctuary, designed in accordance with instructions received in meditation by Eileen. Every morning the group would gather there while Peter read out the guidance Eileen received the night before, which would inform the day's activities. In 1969 TV cameras arrived for the first time. Eileen was interviewed for the BBC current affairs programme *Man Alive* about her practice of living in obedience to her inner guidance. "Is this life for other people?" asked the presenter.

Oh yes, replied Eileen, this life is for everyone.

In 1970 the settlement numbered 51 people and received 500 visitors. In October 1971 Eileen was instructed by her inner voice to stop receiving guidance for the community. She accepted this, despite the consequent diminishing of her status. By this act of obedience she freed the young community to stand on its own feet, and to begin to forge its future success and longevity.

In 1972 the community was registered as a charity under the name Findhorn Foundation, with Sir George Trevelyan among its trustees. In the mid 1970s several best-selling books telling its story were published worldwide, including *The Findhorn Garden* and *The Magic Of Findhorn*. The community was inundated with new members, many from America. To cope, the Foundation bought the now run-down Cluny Hill Hotel, fulfilling the promise made in Eileen's guidance 13 years before that they would return. She and Peter embarked on the first of many international talk tours in 1976, and a period of intense expansion and publicity

continued for several years, during which six books of the messages Eileen received in meditation were published.

Eileen and Peter had experienced problems in their marriage when Eileen ceased to receive guidance for the community, throwing Peter on his own wits, and whatever guidance he could glean from other resident or passing psychics - and sometimes charlatans. In 1974 he became involved with a younger female community member and the marriage began to seriously falter. Eileen and Peter separated in 1978 and were divorced in 1982. In 1979 Peter left the community, dying in a car crash in 1994. With Dorothy Maclean having departed (to North America) in 1973, this left Eileen as the sole remaining Findhorn founder.

Through the 1980s and '90s Eileen drew on her experiences to create and lead educational workshops including Loving Unconditionally, Inner Listening and Learning To love. Regardless of their titles, all were vehicles for Eileen to turn people within to their own sources of inner guidance and to help them learn to follow it. She travelled worldwide, speaking at events including the Brahma Kumaris First International Peace Conference at Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India in 1982. In 1987 her compendium of daily guidance, *Opening Doors Within*, was published. It has since been translated into 30 languages including Icelandic, Catalan and Gudjurati, selling approximately one million copies. In 1988 it was followed by Eileen's autobiography *Flight Into Freedom*.

In 1990 Eileen's sons David and Jonathan built her a house, Cornerstone, close to the original Findhorn caravan. In 1991, a video was issued, also titled *Opening Doors Within*, containing several of Eileen's guided meditations, of which she was a masterful reader. In 1996, at 79, she received guidance to stop giving workshops.

Eileen had been reconciled with her first family of five children in the late 1960s, and for her eightieth birthday in 1997 all eight children came together for the first time to celebrate with her. In 2001 she was named one of the 50 most spiritually influential people in Britain on Channel 4's *The God List*, and in 2004 she was awarded an MBE in the New Years Honours for services to spiritual inquiry.

Contemporary spiritual authors, such as Neale Donald Walsch and Eckhart Tolle, called on Eileen when in Findhorn, and regarded her as both peer and inspiration. Her other friends in the fraternity of holistic educators included Caroline Myss, Ram Dass, William Bloom, Patch Adams and David Spangler. The community she helped establish at Findhorn is now a thriving international spiritual education centre and ecovillage, hosting over 3,000 visitors each year.

Over the years Eileen's relationship with her inner voice deepened:

When I first heard the voice it was like a very loving father with a child and it would start off with 'my child'. As time went on I felt tremendous love for this voice, but with separation between voice and myself, and it would start with 'my beloved child'. I got closer and closer to this voice and eventually it was 'my beloved'. Then a time came when I could say there was no separation, that God is within me; that God within me is the voice, the highest part of my being.

Continuing her practice of fifty years, Eileen meditated at 6 o'clock every morning in the Findhorn sanctuary until, at the age of 86, frailty intervened. In the last 3 years of her life, cared for at home by family and community members, she accepted the privations of infirmity with grace and good nature. Till the end of her life she maintained a deep attitude

of loving kindness. She looked forward to her death with characteristic robustness, and was ever true to her favourite saying,

All is very, very well.

She leaves 8 children, 20 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. She is survived by her sister Florence (Torrie).

Mike Scott

Eileen Marion Caddy (nee Jessop), spiritual teacher, author; born Alexandria, 26 August 1917; co-founder Findhorn Foundation community 1962, married first Andrew Combe (marriage dissolved), second Peter Caddy (marriage dissolved), died Findhorn, 13 December 2006.