

Eramosa Eden Founders

Eramosa Eden was founded by women who combined their life's commitment to the spiritual development of humanity with their passion for social justice. In the early years of Eramosa Eden, they focused much of their attention on the poor, people living with mental disabilities, and refugees. Over the years, they incorporated an eco-spiritual perspective based on the teachings of Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, and other teachers focused on integrating spirituality, science, ecology and social justice into approaches for helping individuals, organizations, and society as a whole.



Valerie Bannert

Doctor of Divinity & Co-founder of Eramosa Eden
Aug. 28, 1928 – Feb. 17, 2018



Mary Ellen Nettle

Diaconal Minister & Co-founder of Eramosa Eden
June 1, 1929 – May 3, 2006



Sister Brenda Duncombe

Co-founder of Eramosa Eden
July 13, 1914 – Feb. 8, 2013



Joan O'Laney

Co-founder of Eramosa Eden



Sharon Smith

Co-founder of Eramosa Eden
July 6, 1952 - Oct. 17, 2007

The Finding of Eramosa Eden



A Promise Kept

By Valerie Bannert

For some time, I had been wanting to find a place in the country for a future place to develop and grow into a special place. I was looking for a place, not only for myself, but a special dwelling that I could share with others who needed the country in their lives.

First, I started reading about properties for sale. It had to be near enough for me to commute to St. Sebastian's School in Toronto's west end, and, after eliminating vacation country, I thought I might explore the Terra Cotta area.

There was a river there and water was a must. I believed that I had a hint of a promise, and considering the Source, it would be a promise that would be kept. I packed a lunch for my pup, Kenji, and me and off we went—headed west. It was a feeling akin to preparing to going fishing with mom and dad. You wonder, not if you will catch any fish, but how many and how big. In high spirits and with high expectancy, we headed for the Terra Cotta countryside, driving on back roads and even the main roads. I saw nothing. Nothing even close. I knew what I was looking for and I knew that I would know it when I saw it. By late afternoon, my spirits started lagging and the thought occurred to me to drive to my favourite area near Eden Mills. We could sit in the woods there and finish our lunch before returning to the city.

We turned off the Guelph Line, onto Indian Trail, and stopped just before a little bridge where we parked in the Spirit Valley Farm driveway. After walking a bit into the woods, we

finished the rest of our lunch. Then we headed back to the car, which I turned around ready to leave. Where, oh where, is the promise? What has happened to the promise?

I nosed the car onto Indian Trail and for some reason, hesitated. I had been out this way so many times before, yet had never crossed that little bridge. Why not just drive over it and then turn around to head back to the city?

Half way across, I stopped on the bridge—it was more like I was stopped on the bridge. Something simply grabbed me. There was no other way to explain it. I looked up the river at the tiny island lush with cedars, and then down the river at the water lapping and dancing in silver glory. My heart sang, half in sadness and half in total awe. I don't know if I said it aloud or just in my depths, but it was, Oh, God, there must be some place for me! Then I corrected myself. I remember it so clearly. No, not just for me but for others. Something grabbed my spirit. As I prayed, I felt that I belonged there.

I took a deep breath and continued over the bridge to turn around. At the end, on the property to the right was a sign and on the sign, printed in large red letters were the words, For Sale. I drove to the gate, got out, and, ignoring threatening signs, Kenji and I crawled through a fence, and followed what once had been a driveway. Through the dense growth of trees, just slightly visible, I saw an old log bungalow. Kenji and I ran toward it and then around to the back, finding a terrace that sloped down to the gentle Eramosa River. Two or three cabins peeked through the woods. "Oh, look at that, Kenji," I cried. A three story, octagonal, tiered building smiled upon our astonished gaze and seemed to fold us in its loving embrace.

Kenji sprang to life, racing back and forth on the lawn, into the river and back to the lawn as if getting my consent to claim territory. He was smiling and so was I. We were not claiming—we were being claimed. We had come home. The promise was kept.

Through the years, as I continue to delight in Eramosa Eden, I often ask, "Okay, God, what did I do to deserve this?" I always rejoice in the very firm response. "Nothing, nothing at all. It is simply my gift."