

Eva Paddock – Radio script

When we first met Eva in her home in Cambridge, MA, she was, to us, just an unassuming, yet charming old lady. After a few moments of conversation though, we found that she was anything but ordinary. On August 2nd, 1939, Eva, three years old, along with her sister and scores of other children, boarded the Winton Train from Prague, in what is now the Czech Republic, leaving their homes and loving families behind, and going to Britain to escape the Nazi regime.

“Well, I had a little backpack and again, I don’t remember, but I have to imagine, because this train was not going to stop.. I mean we were not going to get of It must have had in my backpack some food and some drinks.. and I am sure there were some toys in there.”

The trip took at least 24 hours and was exhausting for the young sisters, but at the end, a man that they would come to call “Daddy Radcliffe” was waiting for them at the London station.

“They were going to take just one child, they didn’t have a lot of money and they saw that picture of me with my sister and they took both of us.”

The Radcliffes lived North of England in a modest apartment. It had only two bedrooms, so their 16-year-old daughter moved in with her grandmother to make space for their new wards. They treated the sisters like their own children, and Eva became very close to her new parents.

“They were just very ordinary, very loving..... very generous people. And we stayed friends with them. My parents escaped, both of them, eventually ended up in England and we lived near the Radcliffs. What I do know and what I have been told is that when my mother arrived in England and came to the house where we were living with the Radcliffs, that I didn’t speak any Czech anymore, that I have completely learned English and I was really in love with my new mother and I didn’t want to go home with my real mother, which must have been very hard for her . But really I haven’t forgotten the Czech, I just wasn’t using it..”

Eva’s parents were secular Jews. Her mother was a doctor and her father was active in local politics. They pushed aside the thought that they were suffering, and helped others. Her father arranged Czech citizenship for radical author Thomas Mann, which in turn brought him into danger by the gestapo, yet they still persevered.

„My parents never ever gave any impression that we were victims. They never talked about what we’ve lost, they never talked about being angry or feeling that world has done it wrong. They just said, we escaped, we are very fortunate. England is a wonderful country.”

Eventually, she moved to America with her husband, who worked for a famous architect, and pursued a career in teaching, and became a renowned principal in the Cambridge Public School District. She even won a national award in education. But, despite all her accomplishments and dedication to making the world a better place, Eva, was and continues to be a very kind and humble person. She gives this piece of advice to future generations.

“From my experience and observing Nicolas Winton,. The message is that it is really important to act on what you see needs to happen. Not to be an observer, you don’t need people’s permission to help other people. And one person can make a huge difference in another person’s life.”