

## Eva Eaton's Path to Parenthood

**T**oday Eva Eaton is a happily married mother of two girls. In the early 1960s no one would have believed this would be her future. In 1962, two year old Eva Sennewald was living with her parents and younger sister in Mexico City where she was diagnosed with Wilms tumor in both kidneys. Her alarmed father, a physician, flew her to Boston for surgery and treatment.

Eva's left kidney was removed, and she was treated with high dose radiotherapy and the chemotherapy drug vincristine. Three years later the tumor recurred in her right kidney. Eva was once again treated in Boston where one quarter of her right kidney was removed and she was retreated with radiotherapy and vincristine. Eva was never aware of the possible consequences of her treatment until an annual visit with a doctor who told 13 year old Eva that she probably would never be able to have children. "It was a terrible shock. It never crossed my mind that I would not be able to lead a normal life," says Eva. "It was such a bombshell. Why had no one told me this any sooner? It could have been handled better."

Despite this life-altering news Eva moved on. She graduated from the University of Victoria in British Columbia, BC and took a job with the Canadian government working in employment counseling and immigration. After a promotion she found herself in Port Hardy, BC, an isolated logging and mining town. There at age 29 she met Tim Eaton, a geotechnical engineer. They married in 1990, and Eva then joined Tim in Papua New Guinea, where he was working at a large copper and gold mine.

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Eva and Tim returned to Canada two years later hoping to start a family despite everyone's negative expectations. Although she received infertility treatment, her specialist did not hold much hope. Even if Eva became pregnant he was concerned about her kidney function and whether she could sustain a pregnancy. Eva's largely uncomplicated pregnancy had to be ended suddenly with the onset of toxemia. Eva's and Tim's daughter, Elizabeth, was born in 1994 via caesarian section. Encouraged by the birth of Elizabeth, Eva again approached her fertility specialist. He was skeptical but she says, "He agreed to treat me, largely to humor me, I think." After four treatments Eva was again pregnant, and Sarah was born 37 weeks later via caesarian section following the onset of toxemia.

Eva was diagnosed and treated before the National Wilms Tumor Study (NWTS) was founded, but she has close ties to the study. At Boston Children's Hospital two of her physicians were Dr. Giulio D'Angio and Dr. Audrey Evans. She has remained in close contact with both of these physicians. In 1969 Drs. Evans and D'Angio founded the NWTS, and they remain active to this date. Shortly before Eva's wedding they visited her in Port Hardy as they were unable to attend the wedding ceremony. It was a very special reunion. In 1994 after the birth of Elizabeth they approached her about becoming a member of the NWTS Data and Safety Monitoring Committee (DSMC) which oversees the conduct of the NWTS clinical trial protocols. They thought she would bring a personal touch to the committee.

Eva remained an active member of the DSMC until the last clinical trial ended in 2002. When asked to recall her impression of being on the committee and attending annual NWTS meetings, she stated that it was "incredible to meet these world-class physicians and researchers and see what great efforts were being made on behalf of children with Wilms tumor."

Today Eva lives with her husband and daughters in Calgary. She says that being a mother has given her an insight about what it must have been like for her parents when she was being treated. "I think I understand now what my parents must have gone through. When I think of what it would be like for one of my daughters to undergo surgery, it gives me added insight about my parents."

Eva would like her experience to be of help to others. Dr. D'Angio once put her in contact with another young woman who had Wilms tumor. After they discussed their experiences and Eva shared her road to parenthood, the young woman finally decided to adopt children. "We all take our experiences and decide the best thing to do for ourselves," Eva reflects. For Eva her experiences have led her to a happy life in Calgary filled with joy and pride for her daughters and husband.

