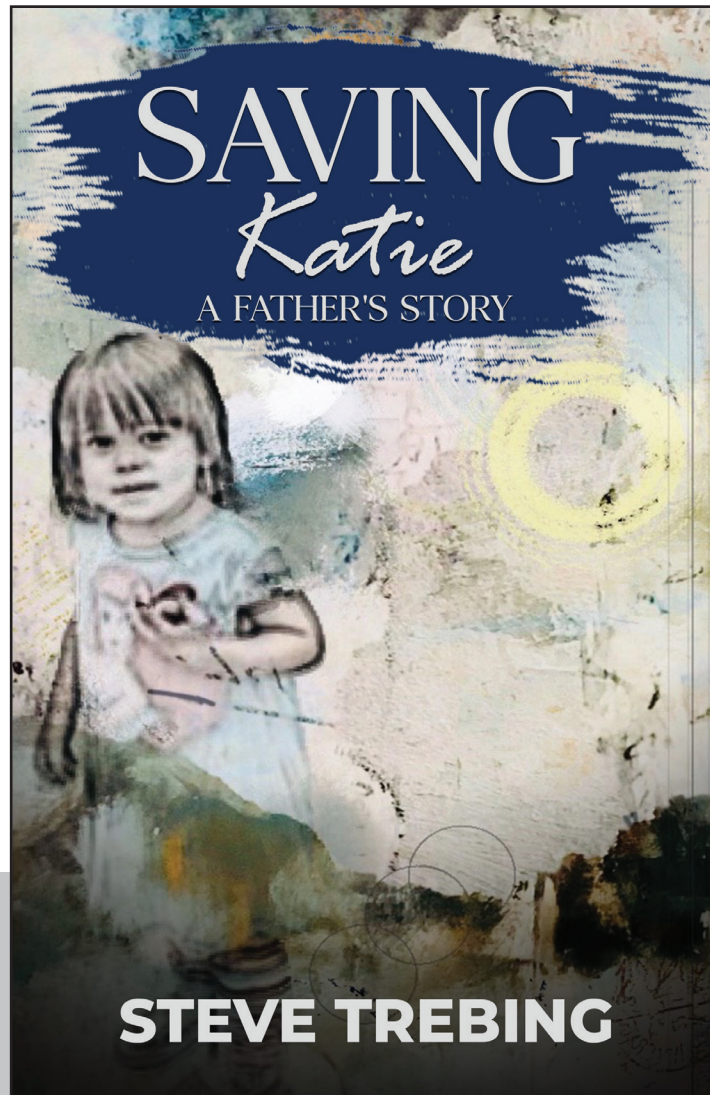


Saving Katie

A Father's Story



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www.riddlebrookpublishing.com
mcharney@riddlebrookpublishing.com

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Steve Trebing

STEVE TREBING is a serial entrepreneur, triathlete, and writer. He and his family have been featured on *The View* with Barbara Walters and Whoopi Goldberg, and on *20/20* with Elizabeth Vargas.

Steve and his wife Stacy have been guest lecturers on a *Newsday* podcast discussing savior siblings, and they continue to help advocate for, and raise awareness of, various medical diseases by sponsoring 5k run/walks and fundraising campaigns.

Steve lives in Nesconset, New York, with his wife and three children.



SHORTLY AFTER THE BIRTH OF THEIR DAUGHTER KATIE, Steve and Stacy Trebing encountered every parent's worst nightmare: the discovery that their child had a devastating disease. Diagnosed with Diamond Blackfan anemia (DBA), a rare bone marrow affliction, Katie would have to bear a lifetime of monthly transfusions and daily injections unless she underwent a risky bone marrow transplant from a genetic match.

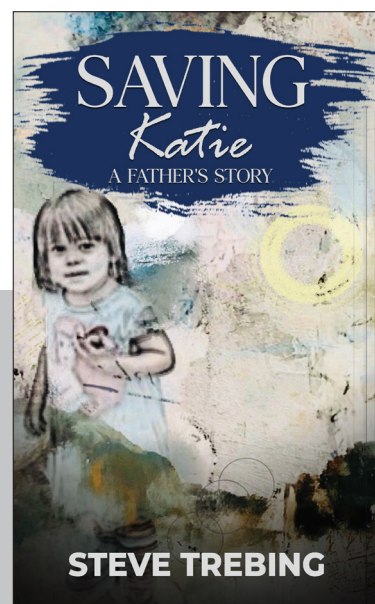
But even if the Trebings were willing to take that risk, how would they ever find the right donor? The only option seemed to be to have another child, one genetically chosen to be that perfect match.

Steve Trebing's emotional—and ultimately uplifting—memoir describes what it was like to care for Katie, and to ultimately reach the decision to have another child, a savior sibling for their precious daughter.

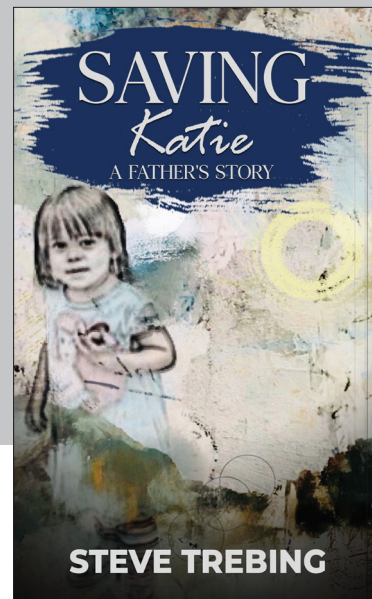


"It has been a privilege being Katie's doctor. And after reading this, it is even a greater one now."

—Dr. Farid Boulad,
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center



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“Many memoirs of family challenge are written by the mother—what’s so special about this one is it’s written by Dad. Trebing is a creative writer by nature, and the moments he reimagines in the Trebing family’s journey read like a novel. You will rejoice along the way and revel in the happy ending.”

—*Beth Whitehouse, author and prize-winning journalist*

“Woven alongside the gritty details of hospitals, biopsies, surgeries, and oftentimes despair, this book is a powerful story of quiet resilience, fierce determination, and finding hope in the most unexpected places. Mostly, though, it is a story of a father’s tender heart.”

—*Carrie Cariello, author of What Color is Monday?*

“An emotional and inspiring story showing how one amazing family explored all medical options to save their daughter’s life. The Trebing’s handled the situation with grace under trying conditions. Bring your tissue box.”

—*Dr. James Stelling, Stony Brook Medicine*



Riddle Brook Publishing LLC
Peterborough NH 03458

www.riddlebrookpublishing.com

ARC Requests to:

mcharney@riddlebrookpublishing.com

About Riddle Brook Publishing

RIDDLE BROOK PUBLISHING, BASED IN THE BEAUTIFUL Monadnock region of southern New Hampshire, is a full-service small press specializing in narrative non-fiction.

Established in 2011, the company has as its mission to provide opportunities for first-time authors who embrace the hands-on approach we provide.

As a full-service press, we cover all editorial, production and marketing costs. We do not charge our authors any fees, and we pay a small advance and ongoing royalties.

Excerpt from Chapter One of *Saving Katie: A Father's Story*



SAINT CATHERINE'S OF SIENA, A LOCAL HOSPITAL IN SMITHTOWN, New York, was bustling with people and doctors and nurses, and every few seconds I passed through another set of doors trying to thread my way to the nursery. I moved at a quick clip, hustling to see my baby girl one more time before I headed home. As yet another set of doors swooshed open, I heard the cries of the newborn babies. There was a crowd huddled around the viewing window and I had to nestle myself between two families hugging and kissing and laughing.

I pressed my forehead against the glass and stared at Katie's small, adorable features. Because she was my second child, I knew her thick brown hair would soon be rubbed bald from lying in the crib. I was overwhelmed with joy, and I could hardly wait to tell our toddler Calvin that he had a little sister. During the pregnancy, he had kept touching Stacy's belly and asking, "When it be ready?" I caught myself giggling at the thought. Then I saw Katie's tiny fingers curl into a fist and her eyes widen. Her eyes were more brilliant than I'd dreamed they would be.

***"Then I saw
Katie's tiny fingers
curl into a fist and
her eyes widen.
Her eyes were
more brilliant
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they would be."***

"So beautiful," I said to myself.

I untied my winter jacket from around my waist and slid my arms into the sleeves. I stole one more glance, then found my way out to my car. As I waited for the engine to warm, I glanced at the dashboard: *11:16 AM December 12, 2002, 36 degrees*. It felt a heck of a lot colder than thirty-six degrees out there. Must be the wind, I thought.

I headed to my in-laws, who were watching Calvin. Joining the crush on Route 347, I impatiently dealt with traffic slogging its way eastbound. I could see blue flashing lights in the distance. The traffic was barely moving, then it stopped

altogether. I took the opportunity to call my sister Nancy, who worked for me, at the office.

"Well?" Nancy said. We had caller ID, so Nancy skipped the formalities of a professional greeting. "Boy or girl?"

I could almost feel her anticipation. Stacy and I had chosen not to find out the sex of the baby ahead of time. We thought waiting until the delivery was one of nature's great surprises. So, Nancy would be one of the first to know. "Girl!" I said.

"Whoo-hoo! Congratulations, brother."

I told her everything had gone well, and visiting hours were from two to four.

Traffic began to move again, but barely. It took me another thirty minutes to cover five miles. When I finally arrived at my in-laws—they lived right near us—I parked in the driveway, walked to the front door, and rang the bell. I could hear it echo through

the house. In due course, Pam, my mother-in-law, opened the door. I stepped into the living room, said hello, and we shared a celebratory hug. Seconds later Calvin came at me with a leg-crushing hug of his own.

I made my way to the kitchen with Calvin still attached to my leg. By the time I sat down, Pam already had coffee on the table. I wrapped both hands around the mug and allowed the warmth to flow from my fingertips into my body.

“Are you ready for another girl in your life?” Pam asked as she placed a basket of bagels in the center of the table. Then she walked over to the refrigerator and started rummaging through some groceries.

“You bet I am.” I smirked while I helped myself to a cinnamon raisin bagel.

That’s when the house phone rang.

Pam reached over, lifted the cordless off the wall, and said hello. I heard a few mumbles. “It’s Stacy,” she said, handing me the phone. I suppose Stacy heard my breathing because before I could utter a word, she said, “Katie’s tests are abnormal.”

It took a few seconds for me to decipher the words between her panicked breaths, and it didn’t help that she sounded like she was talking into an old tin can. “The doctor said her hemoglobin is low and she’s not getting enough oxygen into her bloodstream. They want to make sure it’s not her heart. They’re transferring us to Stony Brook.”

The bagel I was eating threatened to come back up as I struggled to collect myself; I felt a bubble of panic rise. I had one of those uncomfortable moments when you struggle to find something—anything—to say.

“Did you hear me?” Stacy snapped.

We endured one of those awkward pauses. “Hemoglobin? I don’t even know what that is—she was fine when I left the hospital.” My voice seemed abnormal, even to my own ears.

“Just meet us at Stony Brook.” She hung up abruptly, leaving me to reply to dead air. My brain glitched. It felt like I had an electrical storm in my head. I couldn’t understand what had changed since I’d left the hospital. I glanced at my mother-in-law, then very quickly explained what I knew.

I pulled Calvin off my lap, slid off the chair and knelt in front of him. I explained that daddy had to go back to the hospital to see mommy and his new sister, and that I’d be back. I could tell he was confused and sad. Just a few minutes ago, we were planning to meet his sister. As I stood up, he snagged my sleeve, pulling me back, demanding another hug. I felt terrible and wished I could bring him with me, but I didn’t know what was going on and he was better off staying home. So, I kissed him on the cheek

***“The doctor said
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and said goodbye.

My mother-in-law moved in close and whispered, “Take care of my girls.



I VALETED THE CAR AND ASKED FOR DIRECTIONS to the neonatal intensive care unit, referred to by hospital staff as the “NICU.” Inside it felt closed in, no space, and it reeked of disinfectant. My eyes had trouble adjusting to the bright light, and I bumped into a beeping machine near the nurse’s station. I could feel my blood pressure rising by the second. A volunteer in blue scrubs noticed my disorientation and directed me to Katie.

I slid open the privacy curtain and saw Stacy sitting in a rocking chair. She looked like hell. I think she was in shock, and I didn’t blame her. She had been in labor for sixteen hours, had gone through natural childbirth, and then been transferred to a different hospital, all with no recovery time. I told her not to get up, so she greeted me with an air kiss. I turned to look at our newborn. It took a moment for me to realize that the baby under the hooded bassinet was my little girl. I stepped closer and stared. I saw her tiny toes peeking from under the blanket. Her chest heaved up and down as she struggled with each breath. She opened her mouth to cry, but all she could manage was a quiet snuffling. I could feel my eyes roll heavenward. I cringed. This whole situation felt like a dream...a nightmare.

***“On Katie’s first day on earth,
the doctor ordered a blood transfusion.”***

I’m not sure how much time passed before the doctor slid open the curtain. A massive human entered, reminding me of an NFL lineman. He introduced himself and we exchanged a few nervous pleasantries. Then he went on to explain that his first thought was that, during delivery, the obstetrician might have pulled Katie from Stacy’s body and lifted too quickly, which could have sent too much of Katie’s blood back into the umbilical cord. However, since her hemoglobin had continued to drop, he’d struck that idea. His eyes shifted to the chart he held in his meaty hands. “At the moment we are trying to rule out a heart issue,” he said. “However, we did confirm that she has pneumonia.” He was using a tone of studied neutrality, but I heard a slight drag to his voice that he covered well. For whatever reason, I had an eerie sensation that there was something he wasn’t sharing. On impulse, I asked for a quick education on hemoglobin, which I only barely remembered hearing about in high school biology. He explained that hemoglobin is the pigment in red blood cells that carries oxygen, and when hemoglobin levels drop, the heart must pump harder, causing stress, even on a healthy heart.

On Katie’s first day on earth, the doctor ordered a blood transfusion.