

The 80-mile drive went quickly as anticipation filled the Stratbuckers and their hearts beat a little faster as they turned off the main road and drove one-fourth-of-a-mile to the farm. Sure enough, little shoots of green marked out the rows and were still coming up.

Another week passed and there lay a field that was a “keeper.” But that was not the end. The summer turned hot and dry. George would start the irrigation pivot and the next day his “pivot watcher” would call and say the pivot had stopped and then strangely enough would start again later for no explainable reason. Irrigation was intermittent and irregular.



George Stratbucker (L) and Pastor Murdoch at harvest.

But God’s leading was God’s leading. The crop came up. Gus started calling the land the “Miracle Field.” The farm machinery dealer, who lives adjacent to the farm, asked how they did it. June openly explained that half of the field was dedicated to the ministry and that was the answer.

But the crop was not in yet. Their prayer was, “Lord, please. No wind or hail to hurt the crop.” And there was none. I know a bass lake when I see one and by the time I arrived, there was none to see. Just waving corn stalks gently greeting you.

Then George challenged me with an invitation. “Why don’t you help us with the harvest? I’ll let you drive the combine.”

“Are you kidding?” I said. “No, I’ll teach you Combining 101,” he replied. I quickly replied, “It will be Destruction of the Crop 202.”

The next thing you know, I’m driving the combine through the corn. George informed me that the combine was eleven years old and had some play in the wheel, so I shouldn’t overcorrect. Now maybe you’ve seen circles in cornfields, but have you ever seen figure eights?!

“George,” I said, “I’m ruining the crop!” “No,” he assured me. “You’re doing okay.” Then I’d miss a stalk and an ear would fall to the ground. I cringed, complaining, “George! There goes a *Step Up To Life* tract!”

Three days later, we could sing the line from a Thanksgiving hymn,

*Come, ye thankful people come, raise the song of harvest home:  
All is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin.*

The results? The field averaged the highest yield per acre in the 40-year history of the farm. The neighbors are calling it the Miracle Field. I’m not going to stop them.



Pastor Murdoch takes Combining 101.

# Step Up To Life Staircase

A timely newsletter to friends and family of  
Step Up To Life Ministries • SPRING/SUMMER 2004

## How Much Corn Can You Grow in a Bass Lake?



George and June Stratbucker

**I like bass fishing.** I don’t get to do it too often, usually once a year for a week in Minnesota at my son-in-law’s cabin. He fishes pretty much with a Sluggo rubber worm and I stay with my favorite plug, a Zara-Spook with



A bass lake? No. It’s Stratbucker Shores.

a perch finish. He’ll outpace me three and four to one, but I like the top water strikes. I have two 5-pound bass hanging on my office wall for reassurance of my fishing ability (luck?). But I am getting off my subject. What I really need to ask you is...

How much corn can you grow in a bass lake?

It was May 2003 and George Stratbucker was driving his tractor planting corn on a 160-acre tract that the family had farmed for over 40 years in Tekamah, Nebraska. He and June, his wife, faced 80-mile rides to get there with their equipment since their local custom operator decided to quit.

Everything was the same as it always was planting the field except for one thing...a stirring within himself that George recognized as God’s leading. No voice or vision but the clear impression, “Make an up-front commitment of half this field to the ministry.” The ministry that came to George’s mind was *Step Up To Life*.

Well and good.

As planting was being finished off for the day, clouds began to gather in the West. Nothing serious. That night, four to six inches of rain fell and we had our bass lake, Stratbucker Shores.

For all you non-farmer people like me, this is a super-bad development. The water soaks the soil and rots the seed. The saturated clay soil lacks oxygen, sours, then crusts so the seed that doesn’t rot can’t come up. It leafs out underground and dies. Any and every time this has ever happened, it has meant just one thing...do it over!

But faith does not die easily. What about the God-given impression? Can we believe for the miracle? One week goes by. The bass lake is gone but the saturation is not. The field shows nothing. Two weeks go by. Nothing. Three weeks go by. Nothing.

Then Gus, who supplies chemicals to George, called and June answered the phone. “You guys better come up and check out your field,” he said. “We have been praying for a miracle,” June replied. “I believe you have one,” was his answer. (*Bass Lake continued on page 4...*)



The Miracle Field



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15555 West Dodge Road, Omaha, NE 68154  
or visit us online at [www.stepuptolife.com](http://www.stepuptolife.com). Thank you!

## Step Up To Life Breaks Into Prison

*Step Up To Life* is behind bars. Again. Yes, LeRoy Dugan and Bethany Prison Ministry in Minneapolis mail *Step Up To Life* into prisons with a personal letter and a Christian book to those prisoners writing them. Yes, Paul Armstrong, pictured with his wife and both retired veteran police officers, Larry Quigley and Clint Franks lead a Bible study weekly at Douglas County Youth Detention Center in Omaha and use the booklet. But here is another step up.



Paul and Janelle Armstrong

Kay Srb is the leader of a group we call the Store Team. It is a group of men who place our football card in stores, business, etc. One day, he said to Paul, “Why don’t you write a letter to Governor Jeb Bush in Florida and ask him if they could use our material in their Faith-Based Prison Ministry?” When he said that, I thought to myself, “You’ll be lucky to get a postcard.” So much for my towering faith.

Guess what? A few days later, Paul was at home and the phone rang. A lady’s voice said, “I am a secretary from the governor’s office. We received your letter and I am going to take it down the hall and deliver it to the man in charge of the faith-based prisons.” (From a possible postcard to a hand-delivered letter. I was speechless!) The man in charge, Mr. Gingrich (not Newt), sent us the addresses of the ten prisons and names of chaplains – encouraging us to write them and endorsing our effort. Ten sample packets were sent with Mr. Gingrich’s letter accompanying our own. Three weeks later, we got our

first response from Chaplain Kimberly Stavenau at the Gulf Correctional Institution in Wewahitchka, Florida. She requested 900 pieces of *SUTL* tracts in English and Spanish including 40 copies of my wife Nancy’s study book *Life God’s Way*.

This is a breakthrough and a break in opportunity. Now I quote the Lord who once asked, “But where are the other nine?”— chaplains. They are out there waiting to be moved by your believing prayers and mine. And you know what? You don’t need “towering” faith. Just a little will-do. Ask Kay!



### Kathy Schultz and Step Up To Life: A Winning Team in Thailand

Kathy Schulz is a great athlete. While in high school, she earned ten letters in four sports: softball, basketball, volleyball and golf. Then she went on to Northwest Missouri State University where she played softball and basketball. After a two-year spin in the business world, she was back in sports again...only this time in a different role. From 1986 to 1997, she served as Sport Director for Athletes in Action Softball (a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ). She then became co-founder and Sports Director of Competitive Edge International Ministry whose purpose is evangelism and



Kathy Schultz (far left) and the CEI team from Thailand.

discipleship. She organizes, recruits and oversees trips with athletes to foreign countries to evangelize through sports. The crack of their softball bats have been heard in El Salvador, Mexico, Venezuela, Curacao, China and Zimbabwe.



A Guatemalan player reads the Olympic version of *Step Up To Life*.

Kathy became acquainted with *SUTL* in 1984 and it is her tool of choice to train her workers as well as to distribute overseas. Kathy’s most recent trip took her to Thailand where many games were played, friendships made and the booklet shared and distributed. Kathy likes to use the Olympic version of *Step Up To Life* with the multi-sports graphics. But then again, what else would a four-sport athlete use? Kathy, thanks for being a true champion for the Truth and the Lord.

### Anyone for Siberia?

When I say Siberia, what do you think of? Frozen tundra? Yes. Prison camps? Yes. But the Czerwinski’s (Zer-WIN-ski’s) think of people. Having visited Russia nine times, the last two trips took them to Siberia. Under OPERATION CARELIFT, six thousand volunteers met in Philadelphia and packed medicine, food, personal items, soap, toothbrushes, etc. to be sent out to needy cities of the world as a witness for Christ. The Czerwinski’s were among that number and then traveled to Siberia as part of a twenty-seven man team visiting prisons, orphanages and schools. There, they shared their Christian testimony and distributed the vital items that mean so much to the men, women and children who

received them. But also among the Czerwinski’s possessions were 500 *Step Up To Life* tracts in Russian. And after the verbal testimonies had died out in the air, the written words of truth could stay to be read and re-read.

The Russian Orthodox Church has a grip on everything. Nervous managers of prisons, orphanages and schools are not always open to invite groups in – even with gifts to give away. One disgruntled government authority could strip you of your job in a moment...and jobs are at a premium in Siberia.

The evangelical churches are striving to break through this power structure of government and church to make an impact and share the gospel truth. Enter OPERATION CARELIFT. Enter *Step Up To Life*. Enter the Czerwinski’s. They took 500 copies with them. They came home with twenty-seven. That is 95% use. Not bad! Being wise as well as bold, they distributed them in schools, orphanages and jails. And as Dick said, “Pastor, you haven’t lived until you have seen a Siberian prison. The hopelessness there is indescribable.” They also gave some to evangelical churches who are too poor to buy literature.



Dick and Joyce Czerwinski with an orphanage worker in Novokuznetsk, Siberia.

Maybe not in this life, but in the next, the Czerwinski’s will be greeted by someone they met in Siberia...a hollow-eyed prisoner, a poorly dressed little orphan, or a vivacious little student who believed the gospel. Yes, the next life, where God will wipe away every tear. Because they believed. Anyone for Siberia?