I REMEMBER STUMPY
By Mrs. Paul E. King

He was probably one of the least significant people in the country. Or so it seemed to me.

"Stumpy, you're a goon," I gibed one day, and he, his gangling arms hanging awkwardly at his sides, chuckled and said,
"Yep, I guess I am."

"But you should be doing something besides what you are doing. Don't you want to amount to something? Something special? You have your college education, your BA degree, and what do you do with it? Nothing. You should be out there using your brains on others."

"I am," he replied, still chuckling, "I'm working for Jesus; doing exactly what I feel He wants me to do here at the Bible school. After all, it's important that someone should know and use his skill as an electrician-plumber-carpenter, in that order, right here at the Bible school"

"But you're qualified for better things, Stump!" I exclaimed. "Bigger things, And your pay check would be considerably larger, too, if you were out there somewhere applying what you know in your specialized field."

"I'm doing what I think God wants me to do, Brian." The answer was perfect theologically but that wasn't the reason Stumpy gave it. He was too uncomplicated for that. It was amply the way he felt.

I knew that because I had known Stumpy for years. I was fond of him. He was totally dedicated to God and His cause, always available whenever or wherever I needed him. No job was too bumble for him to do. He was every bit as happy mopping floors and cleaning the men's rest room as he was singing the lead part in a Christmas cantata or with the choral group. I guess you might say he was "versatile," flexible, and extremely pliable.

His real name was Robert Allen Fennel, but because of his extreme height . . . 6' 3" . . . and his very thin frame, bad been nicknamed "Stumpy." He liked the "Stumpy" name- said it made him feel aborter even though he knew be wasn't. He lived in a small mobile home near the Bible school; earned his living doing the myriad odd repair and electrical jobs, as well as being chief jack-of-all trades. Like I said, he was "versatile," fitting in anywhere, everywhere, when and if needed, which seemed almost all the time.

My conscience pricked me one fine day. This young man, so well qualified for bigger-better things, should be out there somewhere using his know-how . . . his BA degree . . . in a capacity different from what he was doing. "You're wasting your life, Stumpy," I told him emphatically. "The years
of opportunity will soon have passed you by. Your college degree won't help you if you out-wait your time. Please, do something about it. We'll miss you here at school, but God will send us another man."

He looked up from repairing a broken radio and toaster which one of the young married students had brought to him and he smiled.

"You should be thinking about great and noble things for your life. You deserve it. You don't want to be a jack-of-all trades forever."

Again he smiled. Chuckled, too. "I'll think about great and noble things," he promised. "In fact, I think about them all the time. 'Whatsoever things are true . . . pure . . . lovely, think on these things.' Remember?"

"Hey, I wasn't inferring that you weren't 'thinking on these things', Stump. It . . . it's just that I hate to see you wasting all those brains on these . . . these mundane things."

"Is anything 'mundane' when one is in the will of God, Brian? I know I'm where God wants me. And believe me, I'm the happiest, most contented guy in the world, doing what God wants for me to do and where He has placed me. Why, if it hadn't been for a couple of the students from here at the Bible school I may be in a devil's hell, a Christless eternity. They saw me on the street one day . . . me, a cockey college graduate . . . and they stopped me and told me about a Christ who could save; about a God who loved me enough to send His Son to die for me -- for my sins. It shook me. And when they prayed for me . . . right there on the street . . . something happened to me. I bawled like a baby, and cried,'Dear God, help me.' I didn't know what to say nor even what to ask for, but God knew my heart, and He saved me. Never in all my life was I so happy. I found peace and joy and soul-rest."

"Quite naturally, I asked the two students where they went to church, and when they invited me to the chapel services here on the campus, well, I've been coming ever since. It was here that I heard about being cleansed from inbred sin, and here it was that I experienced my personal Pentecost. That college degree is like chaff compared to what God gave me on the sidewalk that day and here in chapel a short time later. I have found my work here; God had it all cut out and waiting for me, Brian."
Tears were swimming in my eyes. "I'm sorry, Stumpy. I really am. Forgive me for what I said. There is no place on earth sweeter than the will of God. I believe you are in the will of God. I'll never say anything about that degree again. You mind God."

I slapped him in a fatherly way on his thin shoulders and walked away from his grinning, smiling face, saying, "I'll see you later, God willing."

"Yes, God willing."

The words, so frequently spoken . . . God willing . . . somehow caught my heart. I spun around on my heel and looked at this fine specimen of Christian manliness. Stumpy was smiling, as usual; his long, slender fingers were moving expertly at repairing some student's coffee pot. Again I turned and walked slowly away, feeling a heaviness for which I had no explanation. I was busy with the usual amount of work at a Bible school when one of the students rushed into my office, breathless and in tears. "Stumpy . . . he . . . he's dead!" he exclaimed, sobbing.

I jumped to attention, standing straight and tall like a soldier at inspection. "It can't be!" I replied, "I was just with him a little while ago."

"But he is dead!" my young informer cried. "He was on his way to the store after parts. A semi plunged across the dividing line and smashed into his car. He was killed instantly . . ."

We wept together, the student and I.

"Yes, God willing . . ." Now I knew the reason for that catch in my heart when Stumpy uttered those words. Yes, now I knew. Suddenly, I was overjoyed that he hadn't allowed me to influence him to seek employment outside of the only place where he felt really safe and secure . . . among God's people. Oh, I was glad he had found the will of God and stuck to this will for his life.

A strange quiet pervaded the campus as the news spread quickly from one dorm to the next. It was as though a favorite son had died.

The day of the funeral something unique seemed to be taking place in each student. A holy reverence hung over the entire student body and a Holy
Presence filled the chapel, which was crowded out. It was one of those services in which one moved or spoke with awe, if he moved or spoke at all. Everyone sat with bowed head, breathing of the Heavenly atmosphere, afraid to move. And then God took over. One after another of the students rose, either to pray or to testify what God was doing in their lives at that very moment.

"Thank you for Robert's testimony and his dedication to the will of God," one wept.

"O God, I'm a sinner. Forgive me!" prayed another.

"I never imagined God could so fill a heart with divine love as He has filled mine this morning," another cried joyously. "I saw the Spirit-filled life manifested in Robert. Now I, too, am filled. Purged and cleansed."

"It took this to make me see my need of God," one student declared, weeping openly and brokenly.

"Yes, I thought as I wept, this is what Stumpy would have wanted, would have rejoiced over . . . a revival of genuine spiritual power at his funeral. Rather, at his promotion to Glory.

So he passed on to be with his Saviour. The young man who did nothing too glitteringly worthwhile in life, or so I had thought at one time -- except living the kind of life that brought glory to God. He had no desire for greatness -- only for Christ. And at the age of 26 he had pretty well learned one of the greatest lessons of all: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness . . . ."