IN HONOR PREFERING ONE ANOTHER
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Tom Barr fingered the valves on his trumpet mechanically, his mind in a state of mixed thoughts and ideas. He had had first chair in the school band for two years straight and not until Rachael Whitman had come this year had he had anyone who had taken music so seriously and "upset" him for first chair in years.
It had been interesting and challenging for both Rachael and himself as the little game of "musical chairs" had see-sawed them from first to second chair off and on all year, nor was it a thing so much of competition as the mere fact that each was striving to achieve his/her ultimate best and maximum accomplishment for the Lord.

Each shared a mutual interest -- music -- and an ultimate goal -- to please Christ and to be used of Him in the area of music -- hence they had practiced . . . and practiced . . . and practiced . . . until Mr. Spellman, the bandleader, was frequently in a quandary to decide just which one of the pair should have first chair. If there had been such a thing as identical trumpet players he was certain he had acquired the first two. To say that he was pleased with the excellence of the two was putting it mildly; he was ecstatic with joy.

Tom looked at the green and white banner hanging on the wall near the dresser in his bedroom -- Maplehurst Christian School. He was truly grateful for the privilege -- yes, privilege -- of going to a Christian school. His grandparents, all four of them, had made it possible for him to become a student at Maplehurst since the fourth grade and now he was a senior. Where had the years gone to so swiftly? he wondered. His younger sister and two brothers were all at Maplehurst, thanks to their wonderful, caring and loving four grandparents, whose profound belief in Christian education had "nudged" them into doing some giving while they were living so they would see where some of their savings were going.

Tom thanked God for those silver-haired grandparents of his. He had striven hard to excel and not squander either time or the money being invested for his schooling; his Christian education. His grandparents were by no means rich, he knew. But it was their desire to put him and his brothers and sister through not only Maplehurst Christian School but a holiness Bible College as well.

"Do your best, Thomas," they had told him. "Discipline your mind to learn and your heart to obey quickly. It will make it easy and delightful to listen to God. Discipline is a good and valued 'friend'; cherish it for what it is and for what it will do for you in your Christian walk. It will help you in your studies and in practice on your trumpet. . . ."
Tom realized the significance of their words now in a way he had not heretofore known. Again he fingered the trumpet, his mind going to the upcoming audition being held in less than a week. He had wanted to travel with The King's Heralders ever since his conversion and his experience of entire sanctification. Oh, how he had wanted this! He had prayed much about it, too. And now that the time was drawing near for the auditions he was in a state of indecision.

The King's Heralders, a group of five, was assembled at the annual spring youth convention and was composed of graduating seniors. They would travel to churches and camp meetings, singing, playing and speaking, and at the end of the summer, each participant received a year's scholarship to the Bible school.

Tom placed the trumpet on the bed. For a long time he stood looking at it. How beautifully the instrument shone! He had kept it clean and shiny-bright since the day he had bought it. He took good care of it. It was an instrument of excellent quality. That in itself, however, was not enough, he knew. It had taken his persistence in learning to play, coupled with his diligence of hour after hour of practice, day in, day out, month after month and year after year, to bring him to where he was today, ready for auditions for The King's Heralders. Still . . . could he go through with it? Should he?

He dropped to his knees beside the bed, burying his face in his hands. Tearfully, brokenly, he prayed. After a while, he got to his feet. His face was shining.

"I'll be back soon;' he told his mother as he passed through the kitchen. "I need to see Mr. Spellman about something."

Mrs. Barr smiled and patted Tom on his broad shoulders, saying sweetly, "Drop this off at Mrs. Turbot's house, please. I finished Ann Marie's dress. She's to be in her sister Sue's wedding on Saturday, God willing. Make sure the plastic bag stays over it so it doesn't get soiled."

"Will do, Mother dear." and Tom went whistling out the door and down the sidewalk.

Mrs. Turbot wasn't home but Ann Marie was. Her dark eyes sparkled when she saw the dress, and for a moment Tom thought she was going to
hug him for bringing it over. He excused himself and stepped down off the porch, coning a hasty good-bye over his shoulder.

He found Mr. Spellman in his yard, on his knees beside a flower bed.

"Well, well, what brings you here, Thomas?" he asked, getting to his feet and wiping the dirt off his hands. "Let's go inside he offered.

"Thanks, Mr. Spellman, but I love the outdoors. I can say what I need to say right here, if that is all right with you."

"Oh that will be fine, Thomas, just fine. I too enjoy being outside Now, what is on your mind?"

Tom faced his bandmaster with a kindly smile. "It's about Rachael Whitman," he said. "Rachael?"

"Yes, sir. I've been doing a lot of thinking the past few days . . . ." 

"Thinking, Thomas? Like what?"

"Well, it's about the audition; I'd like to have my name dropped from the list."

Mr. Spellman's eyes searched Thomas' face; his lips crinkled in a smile. Brokenly, he said, "You . . . you what?"

"I'd like my name dropped from the audition list, please. I prayed about this, earnestly so, before coming to see you. The Bible says that, in honor, we are to prefer one another. I prefer keeping only Rachael's name on that list."

Tears were swimming in Mr. Spellman's eyes. "I . . . I don't know what to . . . to say, Thomas. You . . . you have taken me quite by . . . surprise," he answered hoarsely. "I was counting on you auditioning also. . . ." The sentence trailed meaningfully.

"I was planning on it, Mr. Spellman; almost more than anything else I had hoped to be able to travel this summer as one of The King's Heralders. Then I thought of Rachael and my excitement and eager anticipation was
short lived. You see, Rachael needs the scholarship; I don't. Unless she gets it she'll not be able to go to Bible school. And I know how eagerly and badly she wants to go."

"Thomas, you . . . you are willing to . . . to sacrifice a scholarship of your own; is . . . this what I have just heard you say?." Mr. Spellman looked incredulous but pleased.

"Exactly. That is, if I had succeeded in the audition to have been chosen. You see, Mr. Spellman, if God spares my life, I plan on going to Bible school anyhow. My grandparents plan to help me with my expenses, along with whatever wages I may be able to earn once I am settled in and get a job. I want to carry as much of the financial burden as I possibly can, hoping, eventually, the Lord willing, to pay everything by myself. Rachael has no one to help her. If you please, Sir, I want my name dropped."

Mr. Spellman tapped Tom on the shoulder. "You're quite unusual, Thomas," he said. "You have proven your utter and total death to self in this beautiful gesture of unselfishness and the Biblical injunction of "... in honor preferring one another: God bless you!" he exclaimed, taking Tom's hand and shaking it vigorously.

"Thank you," Tom answered. "Rachael may never again get an opportunity to do an audition and get a scholarship to the Bible school. She's worthy, Mr. Spellman. She deserves this. It makes me exceedingly happy to know I'm obeying what I feel the Lord asked me to do. Oh, the pure joy in obedience!"

"I have a bit of a surprise for you, Thomas." Mr. Spellman replied. "I learned recently that the Bible school has decided to add two additional young people to The King's Heralders, making a total of seven graduates to travel this summer. The two new additions were to be top notch and excellent instrumentalists. It's quite unusual to have a girl on the trumpet, since most of them choose other instruments. But to have a girl trumpet player of Rachael's unusual ability and excellence and perfection and beauty is rarer and more unusual still. And you, Thomas, are equally rare. You are professional! You and Rachael make a top notch pair, musically speaking. No one whom I know can equal the two of you."
Thomas looked at Mr. Spellman. It was almost as if he were dreaming. "These new additions, Mr. Spellman, must they audition?"

"Yes indeed, Thomas. The two best will be chosen to travel with the other five, only, like I previously stated, these two must be instrumentalists. Personally, I feel you should not drop your name from the list, in light of this new development. You and Rachael have played together so long now that you 'anticipate' or 'read' each other's movements, musically speaking again. The end result is nothing short of beautiful. Breathtakingly beautiful. You have a 'unity' in music such as I have never heard before. If my advice means anything to you, I would like to see you keep your name on that list. I have a strong presentiment that you will be thankful you did."

Tom was silent for a little while. He closed his eyes and breathed a silent prayer for Divine guidance and wisdom.

"In God's sight" Mr. Spellman said, "your unselfish request -- your sacrifice -- has been accepted and received by God as having already been done; just as Abraham's offering of Isaac, when God called to him from heaven and told him to withhold his hand from slaying the child and to look in the thicket behind him and find the ram and offer it as the literal sacrifice instead."

"Thank you," Tom replied. "You are right. In that case, I shall keep my name on the list. I know the Lord will do what is best for all who will be involved in both the auditioning as well as the ones who will be chosen to travel this summer. It's in His hands entirely, so far as I am involved and concerned"

"Amen" Mr. Spellman added softly.

Tom walked home with inexpressibly sweet peace in his heart. It was turned over to God completely.

The day for auditioning arrived, still the deep peace remained. He played two solos; so did Rachael. Then they duetted two. God settled down upon those listening until there was weeping and shouting and praising the Lord. It wasn't long until Tom and Rachael knew they had been chosen and selected to travel with The King's Heralders.
"I feel like I'm walking on a cloud!" Rachael exclaimed softly and tearfully to Tom. "Oh, I'm so happy! You can't imagine how much this means to me! I'll get to go to Bible school now, Lord willing. And I'll have the added blessing of doing something for Jesus this summer; something I've always wanted to do -- use this little musical thing of mine to play His praises. Oh Tom, please tell me this is real and that I'm not dreaming!"

"It's very real, Rachael. In fact, it's so real that right now they are calling our names, wanting us up on that platform to play that second number over again. Are you ready?"

"Yes. Yes, Thomas. It's all for Jesus. Let's go" she said humbly and softly.

Together they walked to the platform. Like one, the trumpets came to their lips and the music began.