

# Turning To The Higher Power



I admire and celebrate in my heart when an alcoholic lives the twelve steps to sobriety. How beautiful is the transformation that takes place. This change is in harmony with repentance and remission of any erroneous lifestyle.

Wanting to paint a sequence of three studies similar to "Mary Magdalene Meets Christ," I needed just the right model, preferably a man. Thinking some might be reluctant to model for this work, I considered doing the job myself if a model couldn't be found. A timer on the camera would suffice. Thankfully, a more effective model appeared at aunt Gussie's 100th birthday celebration. I hadn't seen Fred for a very long time. My back was to the door when he walked in with his wife, Carolyn, announcing in that booming voice of his, "I'm an alcoholic and have been sober for twenty-two years!" I turned to see my cousin with his athletic build and close cropped white hair. There's my model, I thought.

Cousin Jane and husband Bill had brought a photographic print of "Mary Magdalene Meets Christ" to show to us how it looked framed. While Fred was admiring cousin Sandra's modeling for it, I asked if he would model for "Turning To The Higher Power." "Will it be done similar to Sandra's?" he asked. "Yes," I said, so he agreed and stated simply, "I'm not anonymous anyhow."

The photographing took place later in my home. Fred and Carolyn were coming up from Tampa where they were professors at the University of South Florida and wanted to attend a seminar here in Orlando. Before they came, I had asked Fred what kind of whiskey bottle I should use. "Any kind will do, Ann." So, knowing where to look, I went outside and found one in my hedge by the parkway that had been discarded during the night.

I began to direct Fred for the mood I was seeking. "The first study has come to decision time, needing help, knowing he can't do it alone. I can almost hear his prayer, "God help me!" The second study confesses the reality of truth, "I'm an alcoholic" and taking the positive route by turning to the higher power. All this shows in his expression while giving a knockout blow to old John Barleycorn. The third study is peaceful and happy in recovery with strong hands free to rise up and meet life daily, knowing he can do it with God. After photographing the sequence, Fred turned to Carolyn, smiling, and said, "I feel like I've just been to an AA meeting." To me, an indication of art being on the right track!

In looking at the prints while working in my darkroom, I knew another session would be necessary for the first study so my helpful brother, Harry, drove me to Tampa for another try. We found Fred was suffering from an infected root canal and was on antibiotics. Even though just having played eighteen holes of golf and was tired, he graciously modeled again. His condition added to the mood. We were successful!

Fred turned his troubles into triumphs with God's Grace. When traveling, he would look up an AA meeting, wherever he stopped, to give his encouraging words for 12 step recovering. He also had a Counseling Service in Tampa. His love of sports showed in being an amateur tennis champ at one time and senior handball champion of Tampa. Golf and baseball added to his activities and gave his talks to professional sports groups a base for understanding, mutual admiration and respect for his mission. Although Fred has departed to God's Home, his work goes on in all those he has helped to sobriety. This painting has been blessed with requests for reprints and expressions of, "It is very meaningful; it quietly speaks without lecturing."