

## WHAT A CONCEPT!

### Characters:

Connie -

Polly -

Humpty –

The Concepts (Reader)

Speaker1: \_\_\_\_\_; Speaker2: \_\_\_\_\_; Speaker3: \_\_\_\_\_;

Speaker4: \_\_\_\_\_;

Moose -

Worm -

Napolitano -

Chairperson -

### CHAIRPERSON:

Welcome to the world of make believe—or is it reality! What we are going to share IS real. However, any similarity of the characters in our little opus, to reality, is in the mind of the beholder.

We claim progress, not perfection! They tell me that’s spiritual, not Shakespearean! And now, before I introduce our leader for today’s epic, may we have a moment of silence in memory of Bill and Lois

Wilson and Dr. Bob, for inspiring our interest in all three legacies.

God, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change  
Courage to change the things I can  
And Wisdom to know the difference.

And Now; Herrrrre’s Connie Concepts ☺

CONNIE: Hi, my name is Connie. I am a “Corny” alkie. We were all driven into A.A. by the great white shark of alcoholism. (Polly and Humpty enter and cross)

There are two things we need and want; we need to put the plug in the jug and we want to cultivate a quality of sobriety that makes life worth living.

POLLY: Put the plug in the jug—plug in the jug. Don’t drink—don’t think—AAWK—Put the plug in the jug.

HUMPTY: Polly, why do you keep “Parroting” the same old stuff all the time, Plug in the jug, don’t drink, don’t think? What do we do with our sober lives after we have put down the drink? Huh? Haven’t you ever heard: You’ve got to grow or you will go!

POLLY: No wonder you fell off the wall. Remember what Dr. Bob said? “KEEP IT SIMPLE” (aside)  
STUPID! Aawk!

HUMPTY: Yeah, Polly, But Bill W. said, “Chaos” is not simplicity. Without the rest of the program, our lives would remain pretty much chaotic, just as they were when we were drunk.

POLLY: Aawk!

HUMPTY: It isn’t either—or.

POLLY: ...aawk, what?

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HUMPTY:...it's AND

POLLY: And?...Ohhhh (nodding)

HUMPTY: First, we stop drinking—then we learn to enjoy life without booze.

POLLY: Using the whole program?

HUMPTY: In its ENTIRETY.

POLLY: ...Hey, aawk, that makes sense, aawk, maybe you are a Good Egg, after all.

CONNIE: Hey, did you know that you and I—and every member of Alcoholics Anonymous are the beneficiaries of a bequest?

POLLY & HUMPTY: What...Nooooooooo, what...nooooooooo!

CONNIE: Yes, Bill and Bob left it to us.

HUMPTY: A.A.'s Co-Founders

POLLY: Aawkkkkk

CONNIE: We are also the grassroots executors of the dozen principles contained in each of the three legacies.

POLLY: RECOVERY?

CONNIE: The 12 Steps.

HUMPTY: UNITY?

CONNIE: The Twelve Traditions

POLLY: SERVICE

CONNIE: The Twelve Concepts for World Service.

CONNIE: We have both the opportunity and the responsibility to use those tools in our personal recovery, as well as to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Soooo, the three legacies are like the three legs of a camera tripod or a milking stool.

HUMPTY: I see what you mean. No matter how much time we have in AA, we've gotten familiar with the steps—less familiar with the traditions, and still less...

POLLY: If at all—if at all

CONNIE: If at all—with the Concepts for World Service. I certainly knew nothing until I was elected as General Service Rep for my home group—started attending monthly meetings and reading the AA Service Manual (Holding up a Manual). Then we ordered some illustrated pamphlets for our groups literature rack.

POLLY: WOW! WOW!

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HUMPTY: I got mine (holding up pamphlet)

POLLY: But aren't the steps more important?

CONNIE: (John Wayne voice) Ya would think so pilgrim, a lotta people do—but that is not what the AA logo indicates. The Circle represents the Higher Power and the world of AA. The sides of the triangle are labeled, Recovery, Unity, and Service. An equilateral triangle.

HUMPTY: Each side of the triangle is just as important as the other two. So all the legacies are equally important.

POLLY: Yeah, if the steps were more important there would be one long side.

CONNIE: It becomes clear after a while, that we need to live the steps in order to stay sober. And many of us have gotten to understand how the traditions work in our lives.

POLLY: (Scratching head) But what do the concepts have to do with our recovery?

CONNIE: The first time I heard somebody mention the word concepts; I thought it just meant AA's "Ideas and Philosophies"

HUMPTY: The twelve concepts are pretty unfamiliar to most of us.

POLLY: Can we take a few minutes to look briefly at them?

HUMPTY: We don't have time for an intensive seminar.

CONNIE: I KNOW, I KNOW (Concepts reader enters)

CHAIRPERSON: Please relax and enjoy our journey through the Concepts. Let's have FUN---Which IS one of the benefits of recovery.

READER: **CONCEPT 1.** Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

CONNIE: This is an outgrowth of tradition two. Our leaders are but trusted servants; not our bosses. They are also answerable to the groups.

HUMPTY: But we got bosses here!

CONNIE: Humpty, Keep Coming Back. Unlike most organizations our structure works from the top down rather than from the bottom up. In A.A. the triangle is upside down. (Looking up) AND ABOVE ALL IS THE HIGHER POWER—as He expresses Himself through our group conscience. At our business meetings, we work toward an INFORMED group conscience

HUMPTY: At my group it's usually a shouting match. I need a meeting—after our business meeting.

POLLY: Self will run riot----self-will run riot...Aawk !

CONNIE: Your group should elect a General Service Representative, a GSR., to go to the monthly meetings and area assemblies. Then, district committee members are elected by GSRs, and in turn vote at the meetings of the area committee.

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POLLY and HUMPTY: WOW!

CONNIE: And they elect the Area Delegate, who in turn represents ALL of us at the General Service Conference, AND acts as liaison with the General Service Office in New York!

POLLY: WOW (APPLAUD) YEAH TEAM!

HUMPTY: Way to go, DUDE, (APPLAUD)

CONNIE: Ya see, the groups are the ultimate Human Authority, through their elected delegates. They always hold at least two thirds of the decision-making at our world service conference.

POLLY: What about the money? Aawk..

HUMPTY: You are always thinking about money... er... how does that work Connie?

CONNIE: The Delegates have the responsibility for the purse strings.

POLLY: Gotcha!!

READER: **CONCEPT 2**, The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole society in its world affairs.

CONNIE: With AA's membership over the 2 million mark—can you imagine what New York would be like, if the entire Fellowship tried to attend the Conference as individual members...HOOO WEEE!

POLLY: Pushing and shoving—OUTTA MY WAY!

HUMPTY: The city is already too crowded.

POLLY: CHAOS! That's not simplicity—chaos is not simplicity—Aawk!

HUMPTY: We wouldn't be able to get anything done.

POLLY: What do we do...what do we do?

CONNIE: Simple, we elect trusted servants. We call them group officers...including a GSR, D.C.M., and a Delegate to the General Service Conference.

POLLY: What about Intergroup?

HUMPTY: Well here in Area 54, we elect an intergroup representative too.

CONNIE: Right on Hump... and we give them just enough authority to do things for us, that we cannot do for ourselves. Here we see the application of Tradition 2.

POLLY: Do you trust your trusted servants?

HUMPTY: We darn well better! Bill W. and Dr. Bob were our first trusted servants—right Connie?

CONNIE: --and their roles have been taken over by the General Service Conference, and its Board of Trustees—which now leads us on to concept three through eleven—The inter-action concepts...

## WHAT A CONCEPT!

READER: **CONCEPT 3.** To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A..A.—the Conference, the General Service Board, and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

CONNIE: Now, this is the first of several key rights guaranteed by the concepts: The rights of: Decision—Concept Three, Participation—Concept Four, and Appeal, which is in concept Five.

POLLY: But can't that be abused?

CONNIE: IT IS,--in the outside world. Many of us have been appalled by the level of suspicion, jealousy, envy, internal competition, and unwillingness to share the power that can paralyze an organization—and torment everyone in it.

POLLY: I've seen that happen. We need the “element of trust: that seems to be the essence of the concepts.

HUMPTY: As Bill W said “We trust God, we trust AA and we trust each other” right Connie?

(Speakers enter)

SPEAKER 1: (to speaker 4) Well sir, congratulations on being elected The Coffee Maker. (Shake hands, put sign on him of a Key) and here's your key to the meeting place.

SPEAKER 4: Gee, thanks, I'll try my best to do well. I've been helping the old coffee maker one week at a time.

SPEAKER 1: Ya, know I think you should buy some Maxwell House coffee.

SPEAKER 2: And we must only serve decaf, caffeine is not good for us.

SPEAKER 3: I want tea! Moreover, it should be steeped in a teapot!

SPEAKER 2: Then let it be decaf tea.

SPEAKER 1: And we should buy 10oz cups

SPEAKER 4: I feel confident that I will do a good job.

CONNIE: The group sets the policy, then the members trust the coffee maker to do the work, within the guidelines provided by the group, The three legacies, and group conscience.

SPEAKER 3: otherwise the job might never get done.

CONNIE: The same principle holds true at service levels, below the local group—district—area—service conference. Our trusted servants are not gofers or puppets, limited to carrying messages back and forth. We trust them to use their best judgment in representing us. This empowers them.

SPEAKER 4: Otherwise we'd be paralyzed and nothing would get done.  
(Speakers leave)

POLLY: Concept three saves us from that.

HUMPTY: Do you trust your trusted servants?

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POLLY: Aawk.... You bet your bippy...Aawk!

READER:.. **CONCEPT 4:** At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

CONNIE: The Conference Charter reserves at least two-thirds of the votes at the service conference for Delegates representing local groups, all over the U.S. and Canada. The rest of the votes are apportioned among: the Trustees, The Grapevine, AA World Services and the staff at the World Services Office in NYC. They collectively never hold more than one third of the votes. So even if they wanted to, they could never OUT VOTE the group’s delegates.

HUMPTY: So you are saying, to deprive them of the vote would be disastrous for morale and would kill their incentive to come up with constructive suggestions.

POLLY: We’ve been cut down and shut out too often in the bad old drinking days.

HUMPTY: Let’s not sabotage each other.

MOOSE: (enters) Hey you, (to Hump) my commitment is more important than YOURS. I should be able to vote. But I know you shouldn’t, see.

HUMPTY: “See” yourself! Apparently, you haven’t heard of the Right of Participation. My commitment looks smaller to you, but its just as important!

POLLY: Yeah, that’s cause we are a team. If something does not get done, the whole system collapses.

HUMPTY: We have no second-class citizens in AA. I suggest you review steps six and seven.

MOOSE: You mean I need to maybe, cultivate some humility?

HUMPTY: Well it works for me.

MOOSE: I got the greatest sponsor in the world! (Moose leaves quietly during the next line)

READER: **CONCEPT FIVE:** Throughout our structure, a traditional right of appeal ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

CONNIE: *There are two guaranties in this concept—the right of appeal and the right of petition.*

HUMPTY: Appeal and petition?

CONNIE: The right of appeal assures every minority a thorough hearing. We have all experienced business meetings where the majority was wrong, uninformed, misinformed, angry, scared.

POLLY: or just plain tired. (YAWN)

HUMPTY: Maybe they just want to get it over and go home.

CONNIE: A minority of only one person, who knows what they are talking about, and tries to follow the legacies, can turn a whole group around—often avoiding painful mistakes.

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HUMPTY: Now that's a way to hear new testimony.

POLLY: And a fresh point of view.

HUMPTY: That sounds good...now what's this about petition.

CONNIE: The right of petition enables anyone who feels slighted or unjustly treated, to get a hearing. All the way to world service board of trustees.

POLLY: WOW...WOW

HUMPTY: How does that work in my group

CONNIE: Well, a good example is: whether a meeting will provide cake or cookies. A certain group voted to stop providing cake and cookies. At the next business meeting, a member said:

SPEAKER1: I may not be so popular to bring this up again, but I'd like to exercise my right of appeal, and ask the group to reconsider the vote to stop buying cake and cookies.

CONNIE: During the discussion that followed, some members felt that many newcomers continue to come at first because of the cookies and cakes with the coffee. And some may not come back if there were no more cookies and cake, just coffee. Soooo in the spirit of carrying the message, the group decided to reinstate providing cookies and cake.

POLLY: Way to go...Aawk!

HUMPTY: All because of Concept Five ...(Applause)

CONNIE: That's right. And in my group, some members were using our Beginner's meeting as a discussion meeting—so they wouldn't have to stay for the second meeting.

HUMPTY: They probably just wanted to go home early.

CONNIE: Early, I know, but the focus on the newcomers was lost. So at our next business meeting, I brought up the right of petition. We discussed it thoroughly, voted and restored the beginner's meeting to FOCUS on the newcomers.

POLLY: Self-will run riot...self-will run riot...Aawk!

CONNIE: That's why we try to decide important questions by a "substantial unanimity" and how about this one: In elections where close or tie votes occur, the candidate's names are placed in a hat, and the winning name is drawn out. We call this third legacy procedure "going to the hat."

**READER: CONCEPT SIX:** The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference, acting as the General Service Board.

CONNIE: In other words; The Board of trustees ARE the custodians and defenders of AA's legacies and copyrights. The Conference meets only one week per year. However, the board acts something like a standing committee. This happens in cases where decisions must be made promptly—decisions that can't wait for next year's conference.

HUMPTY: (to Polly) Looks like we are back to trusting!

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CONNIE: It's difficult to demonstrate some of the main ideas at the district level.

POLLY: Wouldn't it be nice if everyone read a copy of the Concepts pamphlet?

HUMPTY: Wouldn't that be kind of expensive.

CONNIE: You can get them from G.S.O. and they are not expensive at all.

HUMPTY: That's great; I'll bring it up at our next business meeting.

READER: **CONCEPT SEVEN:** The charter and by-laws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

CONNIE: Ya know, the concepts are designated by roman numerals; roman numerals are used to designate very important things, like world wars.

POLLY and HUMPTY... and super bowl games...Aawk!

CONNIE: The see-saw image of the roman numerals is an effective way to picture the balance between the trustees with their legal rights on one end, and the Conference with their traditional, on the other. This delicate balance works because each respects the responsibilities and delegated authority of the other.

POLLY: Another example of trusting.

HUMPTY: Sounds like Tradition Two.

CONNIE: Also Traditions 8 & 9, and it was the beginning of the General Service Conference Structure.

READER: **CONCEPT EIGHT:** The trustees are the principle planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

CONNIE: The General Service Board of Trustees act as the holding company. They own both subsidiary corporations; the Grapevine, and AA world services—which keeps us informed by publishing a bi-monthly newsletter.

HUMPTY: It's called "BOX 459" and our group gets a subscription of ten copies per issue.

POLLY: How much?

HUMPTY: Six bucks.

CONNIE: A real bargain.

READER: **Concept** Numbeerrrrr err now.. I;ve lost my place..Oh, **Number Nine:** Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

CONNIE: AA differs from the political practice in the outside world where people campaign aggressively for election to office. We "stand" for election.

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HUMPTY: Wait a minute. STAND? Ya mean stand up. (POLLY looks around and sits down)

CONNIE: To stand for election means that we volunteer to be available. We submit our qualifications and in some cases our resume.

HUMPTY: And then the member's vote for whom they believe to be the best qualified. Not based on friendships and such. It is not a popularity contest. The most popular is not always the most qualified.

CONNIE: Bill W. said, "Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example. We say to them, "act for us, But do not boss us."

HUMPTY: Hey, look what it says here, "The base of the service structure and the source of our leadership—is the General Service Representative. The GSR is the service leader for his or her group, the indispensable link between the group and AA as a whole.

POLLY: The Link...I heard of that before...our Delegate mentioned that in one of our district meetings.

CONNIE: Shhh, this is important!

HUMPTY: (still reading his Service manual) " Together the GSRs are the A.A.s group conscience and together, in their areas, they elect the area committee members and ultimately the Delegates, and the area's candidate for trustee! Oh WOW!

POLLY: Groups need a GSR. Get one, get two!

HUMPTY: ...That's what it says.

CONNIE: If you don't have an active GSR and an alternate you are not plugged into A.A.s world service system.

HUMPTY: (to Polly) Then I should run for election? Oh, I should stand for election.

CONNIE: Sounds like a good insurance policy for sobriety, and for those who have been sober awhile, service is a marvelous cure for "creeping complacency"

**ALL: THAT NOTORIOUS DISEASE! YUCK!**

HUMPTY: --and boredom. At our literature rack there is a pamphlet: The GSR may be the most important job in AA. (Holding pamphlet up)

READER: Next, we have **CONCEPT TEN:** Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

CONNIE: Let's look at what happens when a person is given authority, without the discipline of equal responsibility.

(Worm & Napolitano enter)

WORM: Ya, wanna see me chief?

NAPOLITIANO: Ah, there you are Wormwood, I'm getting a lot of flak.

WORM: That's Supervisor Wormwood, if you don't mind.

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NAPOLITANO: Whatever! I'm getting a lot of flak from your subordinates and I don't like it. They say you are power-hungry, pushy, acting uppity...

WORM: WHO ME!

NAPOLITANO: And another thing, I was told you took two afternoons off last week. Why?

WORM: Those unwashed peasants DARE to complain about me. ME! THIS IS BLASPHEMY! HIGH TREASON!

NAPOLITANO: Easy Does It, Wormwood.

WORM: I demand you tell me their names. I'll blackmail them in the entire industry

NAPOLITANO: Ahem. We'll discuss that when I have more time. Now where were you on those afternoons you took off?

WORM: ...I...err. I went to the dermatologist

NAPOLITANO: What was the problem?

WORM: The bottoms of my feet were all wrinkled—like prunes—from all the time I spend walking on water.

CONNIE: Fortunately, concept ten gives us drunks a better way. The trick is to delegate exactly enough authority to our trusted servants to match the job's responsibility—no more, no less. We can't complain about how a person is fulfilling an office, if we haven't spelled out clearly what the commitment entails.

POLLY: That's true.

HUMPTY: But how?

CONNIE: We can elect a new secretary or treasurer in our group. We can give each a copy of "The AA Group" (hold up pamphlet) It contains clear, simple, job descriptions.

HUMPTY: And don't forget the experience of the person who is rotating out of office.

CONNIE: Good point Humpty, and now for **CONCEPT ELEVEN**

READER: The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

CONNIE: The diagram (hold up chart) summarizes the Conference service structure. It looks complicated at first glance. But if you read on, it gets less complicated.

HUMPTY: At last!

POLLY: Finally, Who's got number 12, number 12, NUMBER 12!

HUMPTY: Let me do it, please, Connie

POLLY: No, No, me, pleaseeeeeee

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CONNIE: We could spend a whole day discussing **concept 12**, So, In interest of time, we will fairly split them. HUMPTY you read the first sentence of the six general warranties and Polly, you add a comment. Ready, Let's hit it.....**WARRANTY ONE**

HUMPTY: The conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power,

POLLY: John D. Rockefeller Sr. saved the Fellowship from racing down that disruptive path.

HUMPTY: **WARRANTY TWO:** Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, should be it prudent financial principle.

POLLY: Depending on the service level, from the home group down to G.S.O., this prudent reserve will vary from three month's to one year's worth of operating expenses.

HUMPTY: **WARRANTY THREE:** None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others.

POLLY: Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

HUMPTY: **WARRANTY FOUR:** That all important decisions should be reached by discussion vote, and wherever possible by **substantial unanimity**.

POLLY: Sometimes the minority is right, and the majority is wrong, even one person can bring them to their senses, We need to safeguard this process, to protect us from tyranny.

HUMPTY: **WARRANTY FIVE:** That no Conference action shall ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.

POLLY: Sometimes the best reply to unwarranted attacks is dignified silence.

HUMPTY: Right on Polly! Resentments, caused by ignoring the fifth warranty, could lead us back to using another fifth.

POLLY: And lastly, **WARRANTY SIX:** That though the conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the society of Alcoholics Anonymous it serves, the Conference will always remain democratic in thought and action.

HUMPTY: All of our officers serve; they do not rule or reign. The Conference is a forum of cooperating and carrying the message.

CONNIE: The Steps are there to protect us from alcohol. The Traditions are there to protect the group from us. And the Concepts for World Service to guide our collective relationships. And so, small groups or one individual AA member can be heard.

HUMPTY: Their ideas can initiate enrichment for the entire Fellowship—it starts with recovery—the steps. But how could we learn if no one was in service.

POLLY: Yes, setting up the room—making coffee—cleaning up—or representing us at G.S.O.

HUMPTY: And none of this would happen without principles and guidelines—the traditions and concepts.

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CONNIE: All three legacies together provide all these needed things. And we are the inheritors of these gifts and we must also be their utilizers.

HUMPTY: And we must be their guardians, for the future members of the fellowship.

CONNIE: TO QUOTE THE LATE LOIS WILSON: “I strongly encourage you to present all three legacies to newcomers in their entirety right at the beginning—when their minds are open. Sometimes I meet people who know something about the steps, but think they don’t need the traditions or the concepts.”

Chairman: Thank you for attending our play! (wait for applause, then introduce cast).