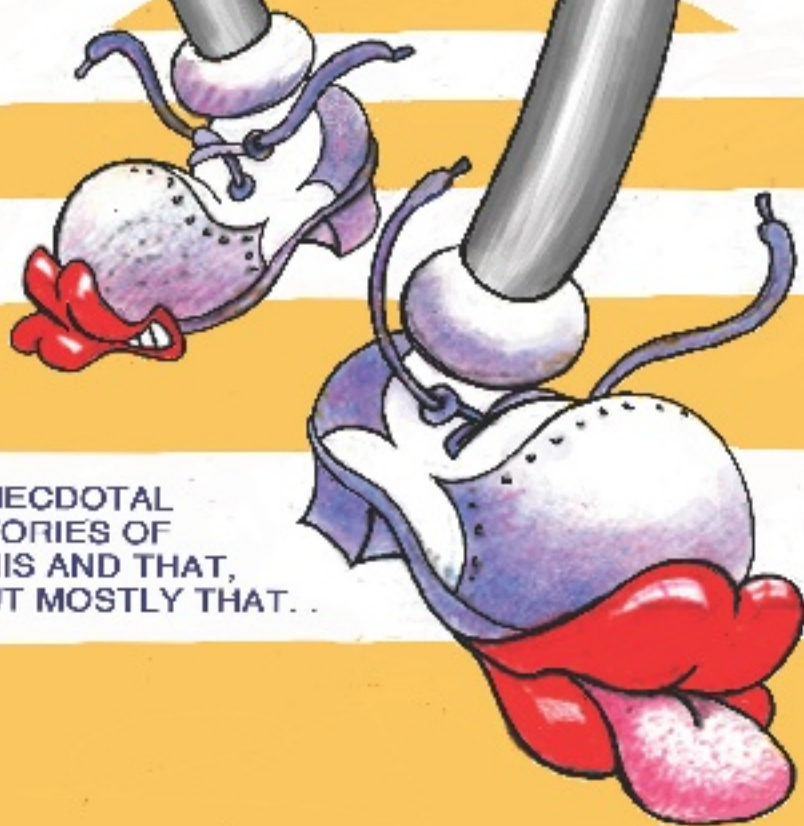
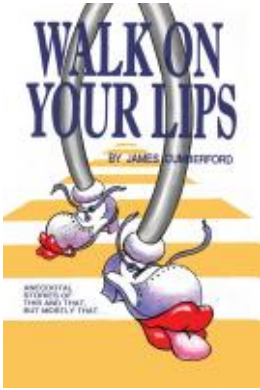


WALK ON YOUR LIPS

BY JAMES CUMBERFORD



ANECDOTAL
STORIES OF
THIS AND THAT,
BUT MOSTLY THAT...



Stories in this book will take you places you have never been = education. They'll give you a belly laugh or bring a tear to your eyes = emotion. Be drawn into a story for a few minutes or up to an hour = escape. The first-person stories stand by themselves: pick and choose by title or length - you will not be disappointed. Enjoy.

Walk On Your Lips

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“James Cumberford’s memories of engaging vignettes adeptly written provide hours of entertainment in realms many of us will never experience.

His narrative is crisp and precise. His descriptions allow the reader to be at the side of the young U.S. Naval Officer perfectly maneuvering a Destroyer alongside a larger ship off the coast of Vietnam to deliver fuel, ammunition and stores.

Huff and puff with him through 50 sit ups on a sunny Nantucket beach celebrating his 50th birthday or the pain and humiliation of the apostrophe tax.

Cumberford follows the classic story mold; set the scene and characters, build up via action, crisis/climax, and resolution and/or learning from the experience.

He is a consummate story teller.”

Sandra Morgan

**Professor Emeritus, Story Telling Research
University of Hartford, Connecticut**

“James Cumberford’s zesty little tales and introspections are in the best of the oral tradition of storytelling. He has made a career of speaking and selling his ideas. As a businessman and entrepreneur his ideas are often strikingly original and sometimes “off-beat” with a unique perspective, not unlike his stories. To follow his ideas, his associates must follow along, as I have done on many occasions, while James spins a yarn and creates a picture-path that will get to wherever he is leading. It is on these paths that James has become so adept and can truly ‘walk on his lips.’ ”

Anonymous

“I once said that James can go for a walk anywhere and come back with two new friends and a new business idea. He looks, sees, hears, comprehends—and thinks about it. These traits have given him an unusual life with many interesting experiences—which resulted in these stories. I’ve enjoyed hearing them since I’ve known him (almost 40 years); I’m glad he’s written them for others. While you won’t get the same atmosphere as I did over a nice bottle of wine, you’ll get the same stories and enjoy them just as much.”

Fred Hooper

Former finance professor, consultant,
perennial intermediate skier

“I first met James when I worked for him as a yacht delivery captain. I made a habit of staying on his couch between trips and came to love his stories; he has a unique eye for seeing the moments that showcase life’s little displays of heroism, humor, folly and irony. His stories are a refreshing and entertaining.

They provide a sneaky reminder for us to PAY ATTENTION to all that life has to offer. I’ve been privileged to occasionally receive some of his stories—and I’m so glad he has finally put some of them into print! Enjoy!”

Jeffrey Kaufmann

Off-shore delivery Captain (sail & power),
Compass Adjuster

Walk On Your Lips

**Anecdotal stories of this and
that, but mostly that...**

James Cumberford

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No Age



My father had no age. He was simply older and my father. He died peacefully in his sleep at the age of seventy-three in 1977.

My mother has no age. She recalls that I telephoned her twenty years ago when she was 62 and I asked her how old she was. When she told me, I do recall being shocked. She said I dropped the telephone and finished the conversation stammering in obvious confusion.

Why is it that children grow to adulthood—age and develop—but freeze an image of their parents' age? It is curious. I've talked about this phenomenon with friends of mine from 18 to 80 and we all agreed; parents are just parents. We know intellectually that

they change, but emotionally we aren't willing to recognize it.

In my mind's eye my mother is still 39. It is a rather peculiar view since I am 54 years old. However, not so peculiar for me to understand because my boys, both in their late 20s, still talk to me as if I were 39.

To have no age is ideal. However, people have at least three different ages. We have our chronological age—dictated by man's creation, an invention called the calendar. By that measurement I am 54. We have our psychological age and it varies according to our personal opinion, created in our own minds. By this measurement I am what I want myself to be. For instance, I may look at a beautiful young woman and picture myself as a lustful 21 year old male. I may see that woman's mother and visualize my psychological age to parallel her chronological age. I am also realistic and understand that if I was in competition with almost 100 year old (chronologically) George Burns for the attention of either woman, I'd lose.

George Burns flew into Phoenix, Arizona, to do a performance. As he was leaving the airplane, cigar in mouth, a pretty young female reporter ran up to him and said, "Mr. Burns, Mr. Burns, do you still have sex?" George stopped, turned toward the young pest, looked her square in her lovely eyes and said, "Not

since 4 o'clock this morning." I want to be like George Burns—to remain agelessly active is ideal!

And finally, we have our physiological age, and it varies according to how we have taken care of our bodies and what diseases may have ravaged it. During my last annual physical examination my doctor would say I had the 'blood pressure of a 30 year old' or I 'had the muscle tone of a man 35.' I truly believe his public relations statements were more valuable to me than the facts and figures involved in statistical comparisons of medical data. After all, I have had malaria, polio and pneumonia (five times.)

I also know I am always younger when I am with any woman, no matter her age. When I am with children I am childlike, definitely winding the clocks of all three ages backwards. And, when I am with my 82 year old mother I see her in my mind's eye as a woman of 39.

Simply put, to their children, parents have no age.

The Farmer's Daughter



I lived in Sterling Forest, New York, between 1967 and 1972. My home was a modern one-bedroom affair located in the woods at the base of a small mountain. I could open the sliding glass doors between my bedroom and its private porch to hear the pleasant noises created by flowing water in the creek below. The driveway to my house crossed this creek and I would park my car beneath a forest canopy. My house was complete with modern appliances including dishwasher, garbage disposal, clothes washer and dryer, forced air heat, air conditioning, hardwood floors and the best showerhead that could be found. It was a beautiful place for a bachelor to reside.

It had everything a man could want in a home—except a woman.

A young man in his late twenties is mature, no matter what his neighbors might think. I was working for a Fortune 500 company, which meant I did substantial travel. I was extremely active with company, and private, pursuits.

In 1968 I stopped at a roadside farm stand on my way home. A family marketed their farm goods at the retail stand adjacent to the road. They did a booming business with fresh vegetables grown on their farm. They had fruits brought down from upstate, which were equally beautiful. However, I was not into whole earth foods at that point. My interest was the farmer's daughter. And, that afternoon she said "Yes."

The farmer's daughter was eight years my junior. She was stunningly beautiful. She wore no makeup. Her long blonde hair would blow in the breeze, taking my heart along for an imaginative ride. I spent the better part of two years getting myself into a position where I could ask for a date. I flirted with her. I complimented her mother. I even put up with endless questions about my airplane and my flying from her younger brother. The old farmer and I came to understand one another; he knew I liked his daughter and not his potatoes. It was clear that he thought I was too old for her. Besides, my hands were greasy

and not dirty. I was into things mechanical. He was into things earthy. He had reason to be suspicious.

If you work at something long enough you must be prepared for victory. I won when she said “Yes.” She accepted my request to take her flying. She would often wave when I flew over the fruit stand to do a loop or roll, making lots of noise with the engine and wagging my aircraft’s wings in recognition of her greeting. She had never flown.

I picked her up late one summer afternoon. My plan was to fly out of my little airport in Warwick, New York, and go west to watch the sunset. I wanted to give her a very romantic and very exciting experience for this first-time flyer. We’d return to land after dark at the much larger Orange County airport.

My airplane, (I say that with tongue in cheek as my older brother paid most of the costs and I did most of the flying; he was busy working) a Bolkow Junior, was tiny. It had a bubble canopy, much like a helicopter’s, so that the view was extraordinarily good. The Bolkow’s wings were mounted at shoulder level so that you could see under and over them easily. It had side-by-side seats—very close together—cozy. I showed her how to step up and over the cockpit side and how to slide down into the seat. She buckled up, not even complaining about the shoulder harness and

lap belt. I tried to be cool. I checked out the airplane completely. I managed to put myself in positions where she would see me doing something which appeared complicated. You know: the standard young male posturing. Somehow women live through all that nonsense and keep their sense of humor, too. About the coolest thing I could do was put on my sun glasses and clear for takeoff.

When you take a novice flying for the first time you want to be certain that things go smoothly, especially if you expect or want them to go with you a second time. I flew as conventionally and safely as I knew how. I did not turn wildly, did no loops or rolls. I tried to keep her stomach on an even keel. I wanted her to fly with me again and to think that I was a jolly good sort of man— even if I wasn't a farmer.

We climbed to about 5000 feet and headed west. She was awed by what she saw and what she felt. I hoped it would eventually transfer to me. But I kept remembering that it took me more than two years to get this far, so I told myself to be patient and to let the spirit of flying enter her soul. I'd be able to follow later.

Our return was helped by a strong tailwind. We made excellent speed and there was time to reach Warwick airport before dark. But we had positioned her car at

Orange County Airport so that we could drive back to Warwick to get my car. We decided to keep to the original plan and land at Orange County. She would help me move the airplane the following day, giving me a chance to spend more time with her.

Luck plays such a significant part in our lives. We usually don't even recognize it. I radioed Orange County and received landing instructions. The sun had set, but there was plenty of residual light. Visibility was a million miles. I knew we would have something to talk about for years to come. I couldn't have planned a better first date. It was perfect. I lined up on final approach, throttled back and held the plane steady for a pancake smooth landing on the main gear. Swisssh — — we touched down at about 85 mph. This airplane was pretty hot to land because the wing area was very small. A power landing, to keep the airplane on a gradual slope, was necessary. If power was reduced the plane dropped like a stone. I wanted a gradual and smooth landing. I had it in the bag.

Wham - jerk - BANG - kill switch - kick rudder - *#*@*#*#\ - and off the runway we went to the left. Sparks were flying. It sounded like we were scraping right through the aluminum belly. The noise was terrific. We knocked over a landing light and spun

violently to the left, bringing us both up tight in our harnesses. When the plane came to a stop in the grass alongside the runway I popped the canopy and pushed it back. I reached over and unsnapped her seatbelt and told her to get out of the plane and run a safe distance from it. I was worried about a possible fire.

I got out of the plane to survey the damage. The smell of burning rubber was powerful, but there was no fire. I looked up and saw her watching me. I should have gone to her, but I didn't. I went to inspect the plane. I saw a crash truck coming towards us with flashing lights and men hanging to either side. My poor airplane had a bent propeller. That probably meant I would have to purchase a new crankshaft for the engine too. What happened?

After landing on the main gear the plane rolled for a distance before rotating forward to the nose wheel. In this instance, there was no nose wheel. A design error and a failed supporting ring, valued at a few bucks, had allowed the entire mechanism to leave us in flight. I kept thinking of what could have happened had we decided to land at the little Warwick airport. Some of us are lucky in some parts of our lives—not so lucky in others. I forgot about my flying guest.

The last time I saw her she was running towards her car; I could see her beyond the oncoming crash truck. I've never seen her again.

A budding romance with lots of promise was dashed by my male's concern for a material object. I look back now and wonder about my spiritual flying partner. I stopped to see her father a few years later to ask why she would not take my telephone calls or why she would disappear when I stopped at the roadside stand to see her. He laughed. He told me that the crash had frightened her. But the real reason? I was too concerned with my machine and not concerned enough with her.

Truth hurts; she was right, of course.

He also told me that she went into the airline business as a stewardess. She loved to fly.

Ella



I contend that we stop looking for love as we mature. Perhaps it is because of so many disappointments and tribulations we experience during our passage through the unexplainable and undefinable world of love. Over a long period of time the setbacks we experience in our private version of love have tarnished our imagination, darkened our expectation and shortened the duration of our enthusiasm.

Love is found in the most unusual places and under the most unusual circumstances. Take my hand and walk with me to a very unusual location. I want you to sense love in all its genuine sweetness. I want you to feel the reality of a person who radiates love without knowing it.

It's a funky place. Built in 1861 as a depot for cargo and passengers—it couldn't hold four wagons. Small? Yes, but it has character. It was built to last through the ages, unlike many buildings constructed today. It is stone and rock, beam and boulder.

It is handcrafted stability unlike anything built from wood alone. It stands in Newton Upper Falls, Massachusetts, alongside a railroad line that remains in use. It is a caricature of a ye-olde New England railroad depot, which is, indeed, what it used to be.

Inside, especially on a cold winter's day, will be found the aroma of the best muffins made in Massachusetts. The old Depot was converted into a muffin and coffee shop to cater to early morning folk en route to work and lunch munchers looking for a respectable midday meal. The door opens at 7:00 a.m. on weekdays. The creator of the prized muffins starts her magic muffin making much earlier.

Ella should be a grandmother. She's just not old enough yet. Yes, she has four children big enough to become parents. A 6'7" college basketball player en route to the pros is one example. However, they are pursuing goals not related to parenting. Too bad, their children would have the best grandma imaginable and the world would have a head start on another generation of love.

Ella should be a grandmother. I don't mind that Ella is not a grandmother. She spends time spreading those wonderful gifts of love grandmothers give by lavishing her energies on her customers. Step inside her palace and you feel better.

At first you believe it is the aroma of excellent freshly ground and brewed coffee and magnificent muffins. Then you realize the 10 or 15 people chatting and laughing and reading and watching are on another level—a plateau of love. Peace prevails. Tension subsides. Politeness prevails. What is this?

It's Ella's world. She operates behind the counter with a stride that would shame Walter Payton. She dashes through her customers with a boldness and purpose that would knock down Eric Dickerson. She catches the odd remark and forwards a response with a pass that would dazzle and embarrass Magic Johnson. Ella's ability to levitate her customers to new levels makes Michael Jordan's Air Show look earth bound. It's 'Show Time' for Ella.

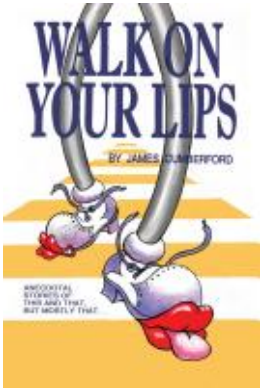
For \$2.05 in 1992 dollars you'd get a cup of coffee, a muffin and a newspaper. That's fair enough in the way of trade. However, there is no way you can put a price on Ella's attention. Her hand on your shoulder, accompanied by a smile and the absolutely correct

comment for the moment, compensates you beyond currency.

For more than two years I have watched in awe at the customers and characters frequenting The Depot. They come from all aspects of our society. A doctor is there every morning at 7:00 a.m. sharp to talk to Ella, to get his muffin and to jump start his day. The town's sanitation men meet regularly at 8:30 a.m. for a break, coffee, muffins and Ella banter. Customers drag in lifeless and purposeless; they all leave energized, smiling and bent on making the rest of their day better.

I'd love to bottle Ella's love and distribute it to the world. A few millions of her bright spots would change the world for the better. I can't distribute her love, for it is hers alone. I can guarantee a trip to Newton Upper Falls to meet Ella in her world of love would be worth every penny it cost. Am I worried that heavy traffic to The Depot will detract from Ella's love for me? No. Love has no limits.

And, Ella's love is just like—well, ELLA.



Stories in this book will take you places you have never been = education. They'll give you a belly laugh or bring a tear to your eyes = emotion. Be drawn into a story for a few minutes or up to an hour = escape. The first-person stories stand by themselves: pick and choose by title or length - you will not be disappointed. Enjoy.

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