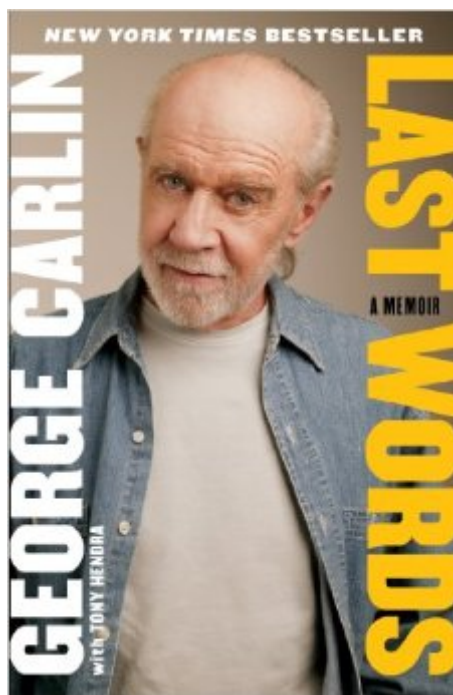


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# Last Words



## Synopsis

Now in paperback, this posthumous work by an American classic was a fitting last book, an instant bestseller, and a huge success! One of the undisputed heavyweight champions of American comedy, with nineteen appearances on the Johnny Carson show, thirteen HBO specials, five Grammys, and a critical Supreme Court battle over censorship under his belt, George Carlin saw it all throughout his extraordinary fifty-year career, and made fun of most of it. *Last Words* is the story of the man behind some of the most seminal comedy of the last half century, blending his signature acerbic humor with never-before-told stories from his own life, including encounters with a Who's Who of 1970s celebrity—from Lenny Bruce to Hugh Hefner—and the origins of some of his most famous standup routines. Carlin's early conflicts, his long struggle with substance abuse, his turbulent relationships with his family, and his triumphs over catastrophic setbacks all fueled the unique comedic worldview he brought to the stage. From the heights of stardom to the low points few knew about, *Last Words* is told with the same razor-sharp wit and unblinking honesty that made Carlin one of the best-loved comedians in American history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Okay, so I AM biased. BUT! I even learned things about my dad that I didn't know. So imagine, if you are a fan, how fun it will be for you. My dad kept his inner life pretty close to his chest, and in this book he shows his hand fully. Enjoy.

This long overdue posthumously released biography of comic genius George Carlin provides fans detailed personal information in a no holds barred format. Though there are bits and pieces of his famed skits... that is not the reason you should buy this book. There are innumerable videos... DVD's and albums available that contain unlimited sketches. What the reader learns within these pages... is what George eventually... with a lot of self-searching... learned about himself over a lifetime. Carlin had to eventually come to grips with what he felt and believed as a person... through an introspective journey... that encompassed painful truths of his parental heritage... childhood environs... religious culture and beliefs... along with alcohol and drug abuse. The fact that George was developing this book for almost fifteen years is explained in an enlightening introduction by his friend Tony Hendra. A summary of why this book took so long to be born... could probably be best described by a John Lennon lyric: "LIFE IS WHAT HAPPENS WHILE YOU'RE BUSY MAKING OTHER PLANS." Though George may have been a "Clown-Prince" on stage... his family's foundation was less than regal. His Father was an alcoholic bully... who beat George's beloved older brother... and self-proclaimed "best pal" Patrick from the time he was small... thus leading to the family's separation. In one chilling scene Carlin's Mother is sitting in a Doctor's office... mere minutes away from aborting George. "MY MOTHER'S PRIMARY MOTIVE IN LEAVING MY FATHER WAS TO PROTECT ME FROM THE BEATINGS HE GAVE LITTLE PATRICK." Patrick was a role model for George... and not always in the best of lights. As an example when George followed Patrick into the Air Force the Carlin boys accrued five court-martials between them. But even from this experience the author... with the added benefit of time and space states: "WEIRD HOW THE MILITARY TOUCHES SO MANY ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE. IT'S LIKE THE CHURCH IN THAT WAY. YOU HATE IT BUT IT FORMS YOU. IT'S A PARENT. MOTHER CHURCH AND FATHER MILITARY." As an Honorably Discharged Viet Nam era veteran... now benefiting from the same time and space... I couldn't agree with him more. As Carlin painstakingly describes his own metamorphosis... he makes it clear how much he idolized ground-breaking comedian Lenny Bruce. So much of what Carlin became... and what he dreamed of becoming... was influenced by Lenny Bruce. Not only what Bruce did on stage... but what he did in the courtroom. It's easy for the reader to appreciate how cathartic these writings must have been for George... since on one hand he is reaching for fame and fortune on TV... and in the very next breath he is sharing all the things he couldn't stand about TV. He was a talk show "darling"... yet he hated the chit-chat minutiae. He reminisces as much about the performances where there was one person in attendance as he does about sellouts. To truly know oneself is a unique gift. When you think of the type of comedy George Carlin created he once gave a pretty good self-definition of what he thought his "outer-talent" was. "I

COULD ALWAYS THINK ON MY FEET, BUT I NEVER WAS QUICK AROUND THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO DOMINATE A TABLE. I WAS A PRODUCT OF IDEAS, NOT AD-LIBS."The beauty of the story telling in this book is that the author openly shares his personal agony and pathos... while at his personal highs... and while at his personal lows... as it is painfully obvious... that he himself... was trying to fully understand what made Carlin... Carlin.

I picked up this book yesterday and finished it this morning. It is a revelatory read, as George's previous three books are along the lines of his standup material, whereas this book is a narrative. We finally get a full three-hundred page book worth of the "real George" that we saw glimpses of throughout the years in his interviews and less guarded moments. As a lifelong fan of Carlin, I could never understand why there weren't a ton of biographies written about him. There are lots of revelatory moments in the book; the amount of catastrophe that followed Mr. Carlin around in the 70s and 80s is truly staggering. However, George never displays a victim mentality; he never blames others for his problems, and his attitude as the narrator is charitable towards the individuals he knew. It is made clear how easy it would have been for George to take the path of least resistance at his turning point in the early 1980s, struggling with a cocaine problem and owing massive amounts of back taxes. It is also made clear just how much of a lifesaver his 1980s business manager, Jerry Hamza, was for George. Carlin details his business problems as well as all of his heart problems and heart surgeries, and he dives headlong into the mess of the 1970s and talks about his years of drug abuse very candidly, as well as his marriage to Brenda Carlin (née Hosbrook) and his wonderful daughter Kelly. He talks candidly about both his and his wife's near-death experiences in the 1970s and 1980s, and her death in 1998 from liver cancer. It is clear from their history together and from Hendra's introduction (not the typical fawning introduction; clearly written about a close friend with whom he had worked for many years, with the caveat that Hendra was required to write in Carlin's voice a bit, a candid admission that is fitting with the subject of the book) - and that's what works so well. The voice in the book is clearly Carlin's. The voice of a friend for many of us who we never knew personally. The insight provided into his creative process is fascinating as well, woven consistently throughout the book. One more aspect of Carlin's life that is shown in the book is just how much his daughter Kelly helped George and Brenda to clean up in the 1970s, when Kelly was only ten years old. She remained an important voice in George's life until the end, helping him shape his material in some ways (she advised him that 2005's brilliant "Life is Worth Losing" was just a bit too dark, with its material on suicide and graveyard set, resulting in the more homey "home office-style" stage-set for his last special, 2008's "It's Bad For Ya." A fitting

sendoff if ever there was one. I imagine he's screaming up at us right now.

I have just finished reading the Kindle edition of "Last Words" and it's brilliant and funny and well worth reading. However, I was struck by how awful the copy editing and production is. The book is so full of typos it's like reading a blog or something. Words are run together, and many proper names are uncapitalized. The title of chapter 18 is written as "BWING, DOING, GETTING", for instance (it's correctly written as "BEING", not "BWING", in the TOC). The photo at the head of Chapter 15, identified as "George and Patrick Carlin", is in fact a photo of Carlin performing, repeated from the previous chapter. And so on. Really, this is shockingly bad. I hope the print edition is better. Still, great book!

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