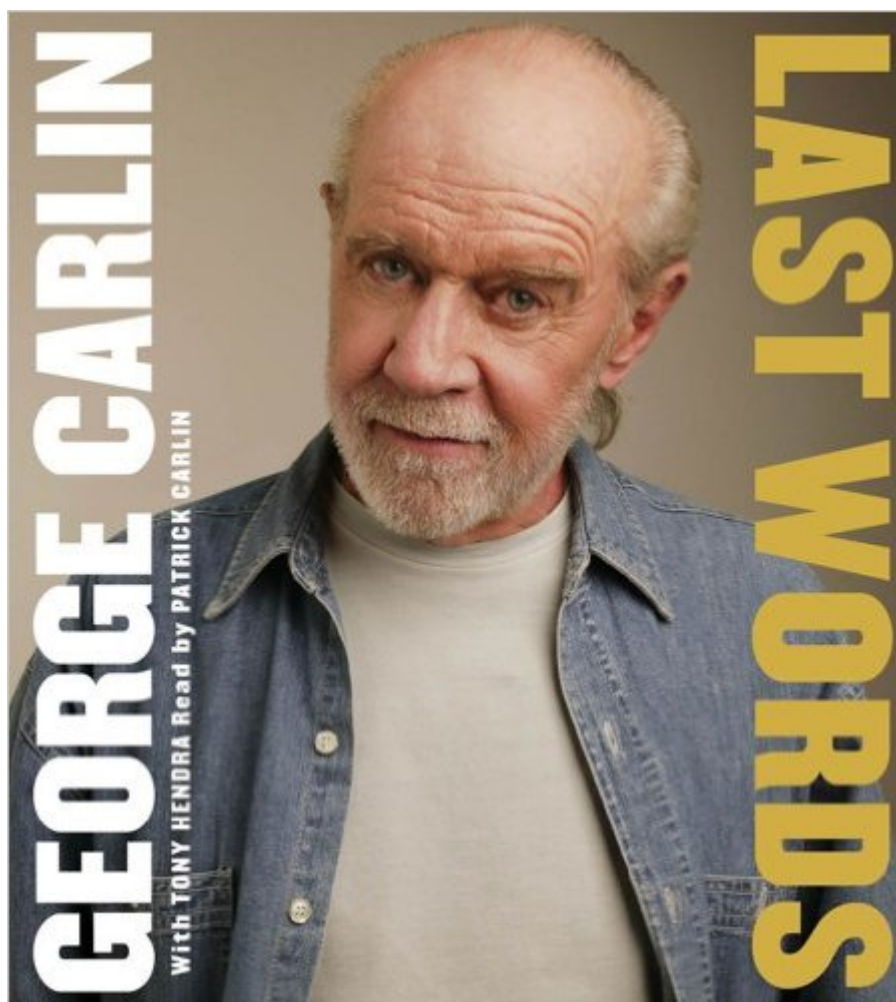


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## Last Words: A Memoir



## Synopsis

With fourteen HBO specials, five Grammys, a critical Supreme Court battle over censorship, and countless appearances on the international comedy circuit, George Carlin saw it all and made fun of most of it. Carlin's journey to stardom began in the rough-and-tumble neighborhoods of New York in the 1950s, where class and culture wars planted the seeds for some of his earliest material including the infamous Seven Dirty Words routine. Carlin describes his major influences as an up-and-coming comic, talking about the origins of some of his most famous stand-up routines. The people he encountered on his rise to stardom reads like a Who's Who of 1970s celebrity, from Lenny Bruce who took him under his wing to Hugh Hefner who gave him his first big shot. Carlin spares no details as he describes his life and career. He discusses his own battle with substance abuse, his often turbulent relationships with the women in his life, and the politics that informed so much of his stand-up. From the high points on stage to low points in the hospital, Last Words is George Carlin's life told with the same brash, unblinking honesty that defined his comedy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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.

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.

Most comedians have a short shelf life. They blaze onto the scene at the right time, and for a while they're molten, seeming to capture the zeitgeist. They say what people want to hear, perhaps

validate some prejudices, and then they fade from the scene. Carlin continues to burn bright, even now, because he captured something lasting and true while still managing to be a rebel - a nearly impossible task. He was an intelligent man, perhaps a genius, and spoke to other thinking people. He pointed out hypocrisy, he punctured some sacred cows, and he made us give thought to the words we take for granted and the words we assign too much power. Here now is his life in his words. The mother who taught him the power of language, the father who wasn't present but from whom he inherited an ability to see through the bull, his upbringing in New York, his time in the military, his family, his early career, and how he transitioned into the iconic performer we think of when we hear his name. *Last Words* is an engrossing read for Carlin fans, people who are interested in one of the major voices of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Some events, some people, are unimaginable to imagine never having existed, and some of Carlin's thoughts are deeply rooted in our iconography. The book carries on in the tradition of making us think, even if there's not always agreement. We are reminded, reading this, that he will be a tough act to follow, but we desperately need people to keep trying. This is a thoughtful book, but Carlin's wit is still very much on display. In the midst of a poignant anecdote he would land a great line, and I would find myself laughing when a moment before I was in complete solidarity with him over whatever sadness he was sharing.

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