

George Carlin Dies at 71 of Heart Failure; Comedian a Voice For Counter-Culture

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on June 23, 2008 - 1:11pm

- [Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure](#) [2]
- [Dustin Levell](#) [3]
- [George Carlin](#) [4]
- [HBO](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Johnny Carson](#) [7]
- [Lenny Bruce](#) [8]
- [Obituary](#) [9]
- [Saturday Night Live](#) [10]
- [That Girl](#) [11]
- [The Ed Sullivan Show](#) [12]
- [The Merv Griffin Show](#) [13]
- [The Prince of Tides](#) [14]
- [The Tonight Show](#) [15]

CHICAGO – “Death is caused by swallowing small amounts of saliva over a long period of time,” comedian George Carlin once said. The iconic and award-winning figure died of heart failure on Sunday at the age of 71.

Carlin, who had a history of heart problems, went into the hospital earlier in the day and complained of chest pains. Still very active, he had just performed last weekend in Las Vegas.

With an extensive career in comedy for more than 50 years, it was announced just days ago that George Carlin would be 2008's recipient of the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor at The Kennedy Center in Nov. 2008.

Carlin got his big break on “The Merv Griffin Show” in the 1950s playing such memorable characters as “Al Sleet”. He would give the night's forecast as simply: “Dark, darker, then some widely scattered light in the morning.”

Throughout the 1960s, Carlini made more than 80 appearances on “The Ed Sullivan Show” and Johnny Carson's “The Tonight Show” as well as a recurring role on the television show “That Girl”. His first album in 1967 “Take-Offs and Put-Ons” featured Carlin's mastery of wordplay and won him rave reviews.

Carlin felt the need to change in the 1970s. During this time, he shed his clean-cut suit and tie look and became more in touch with counter-culture by picking up the mantle left behind by Lenny Bruce. In 1972, Carlin won a Grammy for his album “FM & AM,” which featured a mix of his older humor and new, edgier style.

His seminal album from the same year “Class Clown” contained his famous “Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television”. This led to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling about which words are found to be indecent for FCC broadcast during hours in which children might be listening. In 1975, he was the first person to host “Saturday Night Live”.

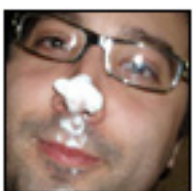
A voice for the counter-culture, Carlin was candid about his illicit drug use, disdain for the government and strong opposition to all forms of religion. Though typically thought of as an atheist, Carlin once described himself as a “Frisbeetarian” (when you die, your soul flies up to the roof and gets stuck).

The comedian faced some struggles in his life. Early on, Carlin was arrested on counts of obscenity. In the 1980s, he faced major tax issues as well as a heart attack and two open-heart surgeries. He also had a continuing fight with addiction and most recently checked himself into rehab in 2004 for pain-killer abuse.

Carlin continued to enjoy success as a touring comedian, actor and director throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

He authored several best-selling books including “When Will Jesus Bring the Pork Chops?” and almost every year produced a new HBO comedy special. Carlin continued to act with memorable roles in “Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure,” “The Prince of Tides” and “Dogma” and for one season on FOX's “The George Carlin Show”.

Carlin always spoke light-heartedly about death. In a more recent special, he joked about people's empathy for grieving with these words: “Is there anything I can do for you? Yeah. How 'bout you come over and paint my garage.”



[16]

By [DUSTIN LEVELL](#) [17]
Senior Staff Writer
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com)
dustin@hollywoodchicago.com [16]

Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 19 2024 - 7:33pm*):
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/2897/george-carlin-dies-at-71-of-heart-failure-comedian-a-voice-for-counter-culture>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hollywoodchicagocom>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/bill-teds-excellent-adventure>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dustin-levell>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/george-carlin>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hbo>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/johnny-carson>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/lenny-bruce>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/obituary>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/saturday-night-live>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/that-girl>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-ed-sullivan-show>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-merv-griffin-show>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-prince-of-tides>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-tonight-show>
- [16] <mailto:dustin@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#DUSTIN>