

## Hardcover: US

## Technology: Taiwan

## Parting shots hurt the most

*In life and death, no subject was taboo for stand-up comedian George Carlin*

BY WILL DURST  
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, SAN FRANCISCO

He surfed atop a stand-up comedy tsunami for almost 50 years, mastering all its forms — television, stage, publishing, everything except his ultimate youthful ambition of film.

Like a fine wine or a blues artist or one of those Dutch impressionists, George Carlin just got better and more scathing with age. It may have been his accumulated experience or the fact that near the end, he didn't simply throw caution to the wind, he vaporized it. He slowly morphed into a truly dangerous man: someone who didn't care whom he ticked off.

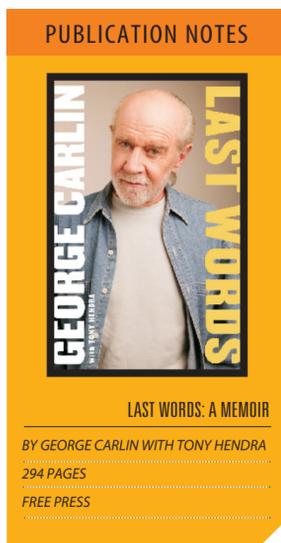
In the posthumous semiautobiography *Last Words*, Carlin candidly guides the reader through the cycle of rise and fall and rise again that characterized his career. In keeping with his trademark style, no subject is off limits and nothing is sugarcoated; comedy's cuddliest caustic critic exposes all, even the major petards he hoisted upon himself: drugs and the IRS.

A combination of frantic schedule and escalating health problems prevented Carlin from completing a series of interviews begun with friend and noted satirist Tony Hendra. But after the comedian's death in June of last year at age 71, Hendra fashioned from the notes recorded over a 10-year period this scattershot, vaguely unfinished yet readily consumable and ultimately satisfying biography.

One of Carlin's 23 comedy albums (11 were nominated for Grammy awards) was titled *Occupation: Foole*, and he zealously embraced the job description. For comedy fans, this book is vital. It's easily worth its weight in gold for the biting observations on showbiz and its personalities. Major highlight: The hilarious description of the peculiar horror appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* triggered for anyone foolish enough to attempt humor near the Stiff One.

You might catch the faint whiff of resemblance to Steve Martin's 2007 opus, *Born Standing Up*. But though both books cover the same era, Carlin focuses more on the profane poetry of the struggle (replete with samples from routines), whereas Martin concentrated on careful career constructionism. The lyricist versus the engineer. Interestingly, both legends speak of taking exhaustive notes of each performance. Newbie comics — hope you're listening.

Born in the gap between the Greatest Generation and the Baby Boomers,



George Denis Patrick Carlin indeed mirrored the times, reinventing himself regularly. Even the archetypal bio fodder is a study in disparity: Early days as a fatherless son prowling Manhattan. His start in free-form radio, coinciding with the end of military service. Stumbling onto the comedy scene, first as part of a double act, Burns and Carlin, then as a rising solo.

*Last Words* covers all the historic landings where Carlin planted his comedy flag. The bust after leaving Milwaukee's Summerfest stage for performing *The Seven Dirty Words*. The landmark constitutional free-speech case decided by the US Supreme Court that arose from the routine. Hosting the very first *Saturday Night Live*, higher than an eagle's aeris. He also takes us through the preparation necessary for an appearance on *The Tonight Show*, of which he made 130.

From his roots as the Hippy Dippy Weatherman to his late-career string of 14 HBO specials, one of which had a pre-9/11 title of *I Kind of Like It When a Lot of People Die*, Carlin consistently raised the bar for generations of comedians. In *Last Words* the premise — a justified one — is that he didn't simply reflect the changes in society and comedy, he was responsible for a few of them. And while Lenny Bruce might have died for our sins, George Carlin lived for them.

BY DAVID CHEN  
STAFF REPORTER

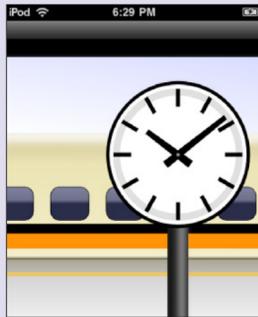
Find a restaurant in any neighborhood quickly, book tickets on the Taiwan High Speed Rail, look up a word in Chinese or English, or pretend you're a chicken crossing the road — it certainly seems there's like an iPhone app for everyone and everything.

Here's a look at a few notable apps spotted in Taiwan's iTunes Store this month. All apps listed work both on the iPhone and the iPod Touch.

## GETTING AROUND TOWN

If you're in an unfamiliar neighborhood and want to find a place to eat quickly, **Taiwan Food Lite** (台灣美食地圖) will do the job. This free app, which has been hovering around the Top 10 in the iTunes Store, uses GPS or WiFi to find your location and lets you search for neighboring restaurants within a range of up to 10km. Searches can be tailored to find, for example, the closest vegetarian restaurant or cafe. Click on a result and it shows the address on Google Maps. Tap the information tab, and it takes you to a Google search page with results on the restaurant.

**RailTaiwan (HSR)** (US\$1.99) lets frequent travelers on the Taiwan High Speed Rail check train schedules and make reservations on the go. The interface is intuitive and easy to use — search for available tickets by date, tap on the desired train, and the app opens the Taiwan High Speed Rail Corp Web site within the embedded browser. The app,



RailTaiwan (HSR) lets users look up schedules and make bookings on the Taiwan High Speed Rail.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

available in Mandarin, English and Japanese, also offers access to maps detailing the latest highway traffic conditions.

Get your bearings at each Taipei MRT station with **Taipei Transit**. This free app compiles all digitized versions of the official maps posted at all Taipei MRT stations to store in your iPhone or iPod Touch. The home page is a map of the entire MRT system. Tap on the station you're going to, and a map of the neighborhood pops up. Though the app lacks any deep interactive features (such as integration with Google Maps), its simple design makes for an easy and useful reference.

## CHECK YOUR LOTTERY NUMBERS

Going through a pile of receipts to see if you've won any of the cash prizes from the bimonthly Uniform-Invoice Lottery (統一發票) can be a tedious chore. Two apps from Taiwan's iTunes Store ease the task of checking your numbers and add a little amusement.

**I Love the Uniform-Invoice Lottery** (我愛統一發票) connects to the Internet to retrieve the latest winning digits and then displays an input screen to punch in your own receipt numbers to see if you've won. The app doesn't save that much time, but it relieves the eyesore of scanning back and forth when comparing numbers.

A cutesy female voice reads the numbers out loud and chirps "you can throw it away" (可以丟掉囉) if you don't make the minimum threshold of three matching numbers. If you win, it's cheerful ringing bells. Both the free and the paid versions



I Love the Uniform-Invoice Lottery helps you tally your receipts to check for winning numbers.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

(US\$0.99) have sat consistently in the Top 25 among apps in Taiwan's iTunes Store this month.

**Tongyi Fapiao Duijiang** (統一發票對獎, Uniform-Invoice Lottery Receipt Prize Check) does many of the same things, but replaces the cutesy voice with a loud collective sigh when your numbers don't match. Winning numbers are greeted with the sound of trumpets.

## CHINESE AND ENGLISH DICTIONARIES

Inventec (英業達) touts its **Dr Eye** program (US\$9.99) for iPhone and iPod Touch as the "most powerful English-Chinese and Chinese-English mobile dictionary." Though it makes good use of the iPhone's platform with an easy-to-use interface, this popular program is the same old story for those familiar with the Microsoft Windows version.

Beginning Mandarin learners shouldn't bother with this one as the dictionary favors native Mandarin speakers. Even though it has a Chinese-to-English dictionary, the quality is only passable and there is no listed pronunciation in either Zhuyin Fuhao (注音符號) (commonly known as Bopomofo) or Hanyu Pinyin.

Those who prefer to search for words using Hanyu Pinyin could consider Murage Inc's **iCED Pro Chinese/English Dictionary** (US\$29.99), which uses a digital version of the *ABC Chinese-English Dictionary* from the University of Hawaii Press, one of the best dictionaries around for non-native Mandarin speakers (or hold off for the iPhone version of the beloved Chinese-English learning software Pleco, which is

currently in beta). The free version of iCED uses the open-source CEDICT dictionary, which is maintained and edited by users.

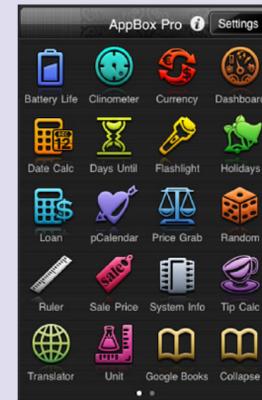
## ALL-IN-ONE TOOLBOX

**App Box** (US\$0.99) is the Swiss Army knife of apps for the iPhone. It is actually a set of 18 apps in one. There are the standard tools including a currency converter, battery meter, flashlight and ruler, but you also can impress (or bore) your friends with some unusual functions: measure angles of inclination with the clinometer, which uses the iPhone's accelerometer, or use pCalendar to help track your menstrual cycles. Hint: Give the "Lite" version a try first, as it already has many of the basic utility apps.

## FUN AND GAMES

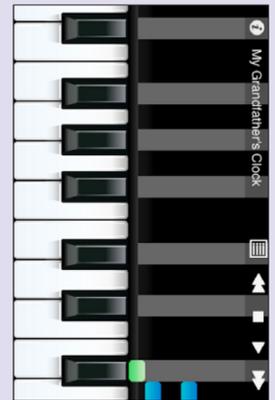
**FingerPiano Lite**, a mini piano for your iPhone, responds surprisingly well to the touch. Play along with pre-programmed works of Chopin and Beethoven by following visual cues that appear above the keyboard. The paid version (US\$1.99) offers even more masterpieces to learn.

Why did the chicken cross the road? To get her chicks to school. In **Cluck it!** (US\$0.99), a chart-topping game in the iTunes Store this month, you play a mother hen whose goal is to safely usher your chicks across a busy street to school. It's simple, addictive and full of cheesy, hard-to-resist puns that pop up when the hen gets hit by a car ("chicken roll," "grilled chicken"). Have fun trying not to cluck it up.



App Box is 18 applications in one, with everything from a ruler and currency converter to a clinometer and flashlight.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES



FingerPiano Lite is a keyboard and a digital piano scroll that lets users play along with classic masterpieces.

PHOTO: DAVID CHEN, TAIPEI TIMES

## Hardcover: US

## Dissecting the dictator

*'The Generalissimo' paints a more nuanced portrait of Chiang Kai-shek than previous biographies*

BY GERRIT VAN DER WEES  
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Jay Taylor did an incredible amount of research to produce this biography of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石). He presents a compelling account of the Generalissimo's life and times, and adds many insights into events and developments, both during Chiang's rise to power in the 1910s and 1920s, during the long civil war with the Communists, and during his repressive rule in Taiwan from the end of World War II until his death in 1975.

Taylor portrays Chiang as a more humane being, with both strong and weak points. He describes times when Chiang, as China's president and top commander of its military forces, had keen insights in what was going to happen, and other times when he utterly failed to make the right decisions. Taylor also touches extensively on Chiang's personal weaknesses, his womanizing, his failure to control the rampant corruption in the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) — which continues to this day — and most importantly, his total ruthlessness against anyone or any group that seemed to challenge his control of the political and military establishment.

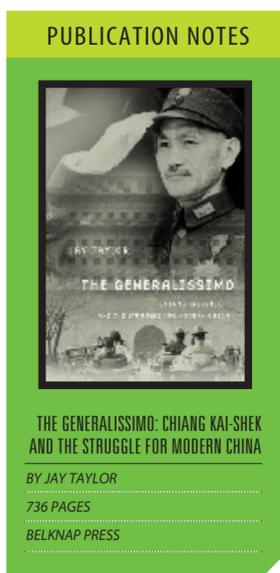
Whether he succeeds in presenting a convincingly more benign portrait of Chiang remains to be seen. Certainly in the area of military strategy and tactics, Taylor presents evidence that Chiang saw matters more clearly than some of his US counterparts: In 1941 he counseled General Joseph Stilwell against an offensive against the Japanese forces in Burma and advocated a defensive approach.

Stilwell, however, underestimated the size and strength of the Japanese, went on the offense and badly lost, prompting his well-documented escape march through the jungles of Burma.

Taylor describes in great detail the endless intrigues and maneuvering by Chiang and his wife Soong Mei-ling (宋美齡), in particular their quest to squeeze more financial and military assistance out of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt for the beleaguered KMT. He also describes in great detail the perpetual tug-of-war between Chiang and Stilwell over strategy and tactics in the war against Japan. Interestingly, based on documents, Taylor — more often than not — comes down on the side of Chiang, blaming much of the tension on Stilwell's stubbornness.

Another interesting piece of information is that — according to records unearthed by Taylor — Chiang foresaw that Hitler would break his 1939 pact with Moscow and attack the Soviet Union. He warned Stalin, who did not pay heed. Similarly, Chiang predicted in early 1941 that Japan would attack the US (the Pearl Harbor attack which took place in December 1941). However, in other situations, he gravely miscalculated: for instance, the loss of Manchuria to Japan in the early 1930s, and the loss of China itself to the Communists between 1945 and 1949 were largely caused by petulant decision-making on Chiang's part. To be fair, it must be noted that the 1948 loss of Manchuria was heavily influenced by the assistance provided to the Communist troops by Moscow.

Taylor also goes into significant detail in describing Chiang's repressive rule in Taiwan after the end of World



War II, including a fair account of the 228 Incident in 1947, when Chiang sent troops from China to Taiwan to put down protests by native Taiwanese against newly arrived Mainlanders and the corruption of the recently installed KMT government, leading to a massacre of some 28,000 people, many of them students, professionals and leading political members of the Taiwanese community. For the next four decades the Taiwanese were prohibited from even mentioning 228, and it wasn't until the democratization

of the late 1980s that it was possible to talk about it.

Where I strongly disagree with Taylor is his assertion that Chiang's rule in Taiwan laid the foundation for Taiwan's prosperity and "set the stage for Taiwan's development of a vigorous democracy." This is simply not the case. It can actually be argued that without the presence of the Chiang regime, Taiwan would have fared much better, both in terms of economic development as well as the transition to democracy. Following World War II, Taiwan possessed — because of the Japanese colonial period — a much better infrastructure than had ever existed in China, and would have prospered better if Chiang had not been there to perpetuate his wasteful "recover the mainland" line.

On the issue of democracy: Chiang gave only lip service to this idea to maintain his ties with the successive US governments, but in the meantime continued a repressive one-party dictatorship for several decades. In fact, Taiwan's momentous transition to democracy in the 1980s was driven by the country's grassroots democracy movement and came about in spite of vigorous opposition from the ruling KMT. Sadly, at the present time, the successors of this same KMT are — again — disregarding basic democratic principles and causing an erosion of Taiwan's hard-won human rights, democracy and press freedoms in an apparent attempt to drive Taiwan closer to their old archenemies, the Chinese Communists.

Gerrit van der Wees is the editor of Taiwan Communique.

## Policy

FROM P13

Law Yuk-kai (羅沃啓), director of Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, said the "court has adopted a very generous approach to the government."

"It's clear the government has breached duty of candor and destroyed papers [that could have been evidence in court], or at least lied," Law said in a phone interview. "In those circumstances, the court is reasonably expected to rule against the government."

Law said Ma's reasons constituted a "very small margin" to justify ruling in the government's favor despite a breach of candor. He had hoped to hear the Court of Final Appeal deliberate the matter: "I think we need a clarification by the higher court."

Law, whose organization is a non-partisan, non-governmental watchdog with a focus on constitutional and international human rights law, said the government had ultimately benefited by not presenting evidence. "It is very undesirable to have a ruling in which a government party benefits from destroying evidence ... If that is allowed to happen, there may be future cases," he said.

Law said the judgment has "positive sides" because the judge said that the government has "a responsibility to be frank to the court." However, Law added, "I think justice could better be served by ruling against the government in this case. It would also help improve our government administration by telling the authorities that they cannot benefit from wrongdoing."

For Chu and the other Taiwanese, the ruling was disappointing, but not surprising. Chu says Ma's judgment in this case is misleading. His reasons for finding in the government's favor were taken out of context, she says.

"Why didn't we cross-examine [Tong]?" Chu explained. "The legal purpose of cross-examining is to attack the credibility of an affirmation [written statement]." But at the Court of First Instance, the judges were skeptical of Tong's statement because the documents in the case had

allegedly been destroyed years before, she said. "Our counsel said that if we applied to cross-examine, the court would turn it down and tell you, you don't have to. In the experience of those senior barristers, the judges used very strong wording on the affirmation. It was quite sufficient."

As for narrowing the request for government documents in 2006, Chu said Ho, Tse, Wai & Partners had "asked the government, the Department of Justice, to disclose all documents" related to the 2003 incident. "They refused, but we didn't give up." Instead, they tried different tactics to seek evidence.

Chu and the others have decided not to appeal to the Final Court of Appeal, where they feel there is little chance of victory. If they were to lose, the court could order them to pay the Immigration Department's legal costs. The respondents were also discouraged by media reports that Ma may become chief justice of the Final Court of Appeal next year, when the current chief justice, Andrew Li (李國龍), retires. They feel that with Ma heading the court, the chances of a different ruling would be limited.

Furthermore, the goal of filing a judicial review was obtaining a ruling on the question of religious discrimination. One of Chu's main concerns is the alleged existence of a "blacklist" of Falun Gong practitioners used by Hong Kong immigration authorities to block them from entry at "sensitive times," such as when protests or conferences are planned in Hong Kong.

But there was no guarantee that the Final Court of Appeal would have addressed that question. It might have focused on the government's breach of candor, as the Court of Appeal did.

As Chu sees it, in the end, the government got away both with breaching candor and blocking any investigation into the February 2003 incident and the blacklist.

At the end of his judgment, Ma says the government got off lightly. After dismissing the appeal, he writes: "I conclude this judgment by saying that the Respondent [government] can consider himself extremely fortunate in these proceedings." Chu couldn't agree more.