Farewell to 2 Giants

June 23, 2008 By Paul Dalton

Today I woke up to learn that two old friends are gone: George Carlin and Cody?s Books. Of course, neither were friends in a strict sense- but I loved them both and they will be missed.

I am not really big on comedians in general. I like to laugh and all, but comedy, as a genre, is just not that important to me. George Carlin transcended, or maybe just elevated the medium. The driving force behind his work was a sharp sense of irreverence- speaking the truth to power, especially when it was uncomfortable.

Carlin is most famous of course for his, ?7 Words You Can Never Say on Television.? Much will be written on those words in the wake of his death. I want to quote the less famous first words of this piece,

I love words. I thank you for hearing my words.
I want to tell you something about words that I think is important.
They’re my work, they’re my play, they’re my passion.
Words are all we have, really. We have thoughts but thoughts are fluid.
then we assign a word to a thought and we’re stuck with that word for
that thought, so be careful with words. I like to think that the same

words that hurt can heal, it is a matter of how you pick them.

I share Carlin?s love for words, his respect for their power, and his indignation at those who would seek to suppress them. I will miss George Carlin.

Cody?s Books was a Bay Area institution. Its flagship store on Telegraph Avenue was the first book store I went to when I moved here. A combination of bad business decision and the flagging market in all things publishing led to its untimely demise.

I played my small part in killing it. The convenience of buying books from by desk has changed my book buying habits. I read as much as I ever have, but spend less time in bookstores.

Shame on me. There is something special about browsing the aisles of a book store- picking up titles, reading the jackets, discovering books you didn?t know existed, walking out the door and in to a coffee shop to start reading. It isn?t hyperbole to say that independent book sellers are vanishing. Cody?s was one of Berkeley?s signature stores, and it is no longer.

Farewell to Cody?s and George Carlin. The world or words is worse off without you. I am worse off without you.

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