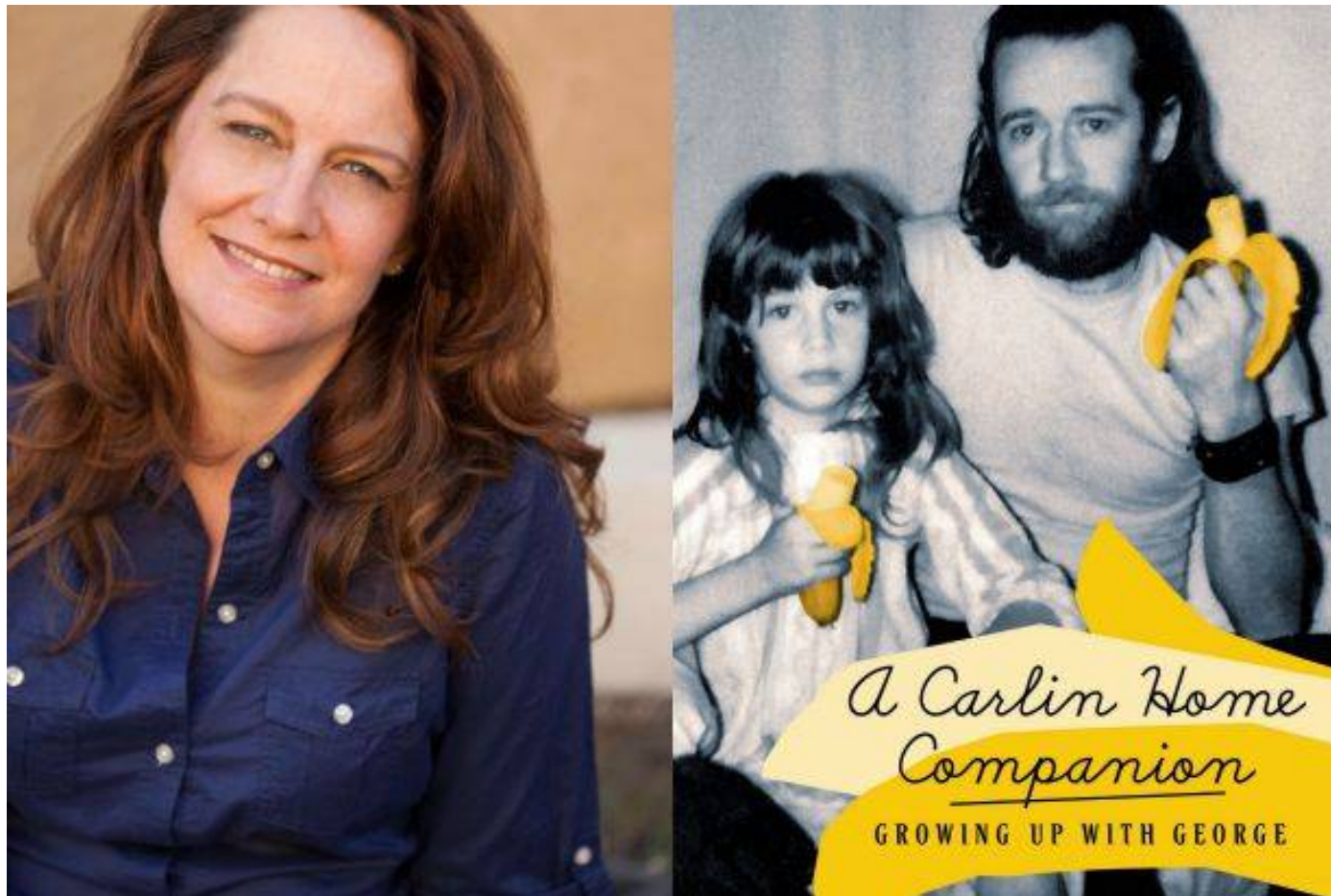


“A Carlin Home Companion” for the hippest guy in the room: “He was born when the world was ready for him – he never took that for granted”



There’s so much pain – alcoholism, drug addiction, arrests, heart attacks, untimely death — and so much pleasure — humor and family togetherness — in Kelly Carlin’s new memoir that it’s hard to figure out whether she deserves to be envied or pitied. [“A Carlin Home Companion: Growing Up With George,”](#) built in part from a series of Kelly’s solo shows, tells the story of the pioneering comedian through the eyes of his daughter, born in 1963. While still a child, Kelly saw George go from being a purportedly straight, suit-and-tie wearing comedian who could convincingly substitute-host for Johnny Carson to the bearded countercultural hero of “Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television.”

Much of “A Carlin Home Companion” looks at Kelly’s childhood, her parents’ tumultuous marriage, her mother’s raging alcoholism, the often sweet relationship she had with her father, and her own rebounding from her own difficult early years.

We spoke to Kelly Carlin from her home in Los Angeles; the interview has been edited slightly for clarity.

There's a lot of loss and tragedy in here. I wonder if this book was hard to write – emotionally hard to put together.

Yes and no. Part of it wasn't because I'd been talking about these events for about a decade in different storytelling venues, and working on myself for a long time. In many, multiple ways, whether straight therapy or meditation practice ... and had healed from a lot of it. It prepared me well to tell my story.

But there were particular moments where I had to slow down and go back in time so that I could really articulate what it was like to be in those moments. And those were really tough – absolutely.

There are a lot of ups and downs in the book – especially in your early years. What do you recall as the best times growing up with your dad, and when were the worst times?

I'd say the best times were before I was 12, and my parents were sober. The moments of sobriety. And when we were on the road together – we were all very comfortable there, there was a sense of adventure, there was an excitement, always, around it.

Also really small moments – I would crawl into bed between my parents, we would watch TV together. It's such a family thing, especially in the '60s and '70s, to watch TV together. That's where your taste is shaped – by what your parents are watching and laughing at. So to be able to share Carol Burnett with my parents, or silly animal shows while my dad did the voices – there was a family intimacy in those moments that was so wonderful.

There were also a lot of low points. Which ones stuck out for you?

I think the most difficult times were when my parents' alcoholism and drug addiction was so out of control, and I was old enough to kind of know what was going on. And having to live a dual life, between the insanity at home – very terrifying times — and showing up at school to be the straight-A student and the good girl, the everything-is-fine dialogue with the world. That was hands down the most difficult and probably traumatic times of my life.

And then of course my mother dying was a very difficult time for me as well.

Your father became a kind of counterculture god in the '70s – do you think he enjoyed being famous? Did fame change him?