

Rancho Mirage Writers Fest 'Politics'



James Fallows, Senator Jeff Flake, Karl Rove and Bret Stephens with the moderator, Robert Shrum. Photo by Pat Krause



James Carville, Senator Jeff Flake, and Karl Rove. Photo by Pat Krause

Story and Photos by Pat Krause

The Rancho Mirage Writers Fest has grown by leaps and bounds. Thousand of people descending in the Rancho Mirage Public Library to listen to a variety of authors and speakers. This yearly event has become huge, and everyone must love to read as people brought and bought books and filled the rooms where authors spoke about their books. There were several rooms, Steinbeck, Didion, London, and Disney, where the sessions were held.

The variety of authors ran the gamut of topics. Politics from both sides was a vast topic and filled to overflowing the large rooms. The former Senator Barbara Boxer took the Stage with other authors. I noticed in the crowd many local dignitaries, mayors and councilmen, and the former California Governor Gray Davis. I watched two events where there were 5 people on Stage. Both Democrats and

Republicans spoke and opposed each other in a casual setting. The moderator was author Robert Schrum. He kept the conversation lively.

The first one I watched was with James Fallows, Senator Jeff Flake, Karl Rove, and Bret Stephens, with Robert Shrum moderating. Karl Rove was asked how he felt when social media made derogatory statements about him and said he rarely reads them. He has staff to do that and let him know if something is worth looking at. Some agreed that the media is corrosive by not getting facts and reporting only what they want their readers and listeners to see and hear.

One was worried that

Climate Change is not being addressed as critical. He was hoping they could work across the aisle to get something done with that. There are significant disagreements about what the real facts are. They agreed that in years past, there were little ways to get the messages of their ideas to the public. Today social media plays a big part in letting people hear the news. It is also a destructive force as there is no way to stop people from making their views on both sides, either true or what they want to say to make the opposite side look bad.

The conversations were cordial, and no one was offensive to the other on Stage. These conversations last 45 minutes, and that gives all the people attending time to get to the next discussion they are interested in. Scheduled talks stated early at 8:30 lasted until 3:45 with time out for a box lunch provided free. There was also free coffee and water and sweets for those people that wanted a snack during the conversations.

The second scheduled talk was after lunch and included James Carville, Senator Jeff Flake, Karl Rove, and Bret Stephens. Robert Shrum was again the moderator who asked very pertinent questions of all on Stage. They all agreed that any nominee could be elected but felt that some of them would drop out after the Iowa caucus in February. One person said that 50 million more Democrats were voting in the last election, and that could make a difference. The previous election saw the highest voter turn out in recent history. One noted that it isn't always the one they agree with but who they fall in love

with that will get their vote.

One noted that the 46 and younger crowd know nothing about socialism or communism as all that was before their time. Some will vote only because they don't like the other, and that goes for both sides. They reiterated that everyone should work to make an informed choice, and it is essential as every vote counts.

One comment was that President Trump was willing to say what others are afraid to say. The response was that Bernie Sanders has all the same strengths. They discussed Bloomberg and said his message is Vote for Me, I am a real billionaire and felt he was not going to win the nomination. The banter back and forth was exciting and brought out their ideas.

One asked if the Democrats would support Bernie Sanders in the long run. Biden is still leading, but they don't discount Elizabeth Warren but unsure if any could beat President Trump in 2020, but anything is possible.

They said that it comes down to their demeanor in the last few months and how they portray themselves and their message. They said it was a bit strange that minorities didn't rally around those vying for president like Booker and Harris etc. Some felt that Bernie and Warren would likely lose to President Trump, but Biden may have a chance. They discussed the candidates and their feelings on each. One noted Biden had low energy where Bernie has high energy in his speeches.

One indicated that even Bernie did not know how much his programs would cost.

One stated that there is a lot more money going to the Democratic nominees, and there is less money spent on the Republican side. One person noted that the Democrats are out of touch with the people. Each speaker had the time to make his thoughts and ideas known. Sometimes they all agreed and then would disagree in a friendly manner. These talks are very enlightening, but most did not sway a person to change his vote. These were their ideas and what they felt which is what you see a lot of on TV, but you got to hear both sides in one session, which made it more explicit without a one-sided opinion.