

Desert Sun.

To do this weekend: Rancho Mirage Writers Festival

Bruce Fessier Palm Springs Desert Sun

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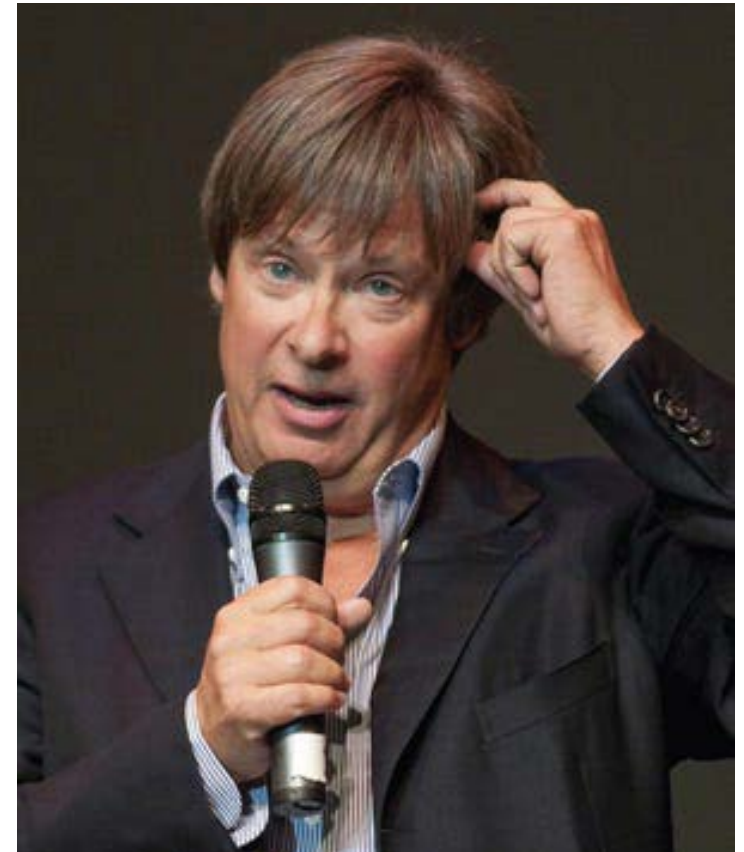
Meeting of the minds: The Rancho Mirage Writers Festival may be the best writers gathering of its kind because it addresses our civilization's past, future and present. Margaret MacMillan will discuss the six-month-long Paris peace talks after World War I, which could have made the world a better place, but instead set up a century of problems. Cardiologist Eric Topol will discuss new technologies to treat chronic disease and keep hospital costs down.

This year's talent pool includes folks like historian Douglas Brinkley, political consultant Karl Rove and New York Times columnist Bret Stephens talking about the American political divide; novelists Greg Iles and Scott Turow discussing their craft, and author Hanna Rosen and New Yorker writer Rebecca Mead talking about "The End of Men."

Humorist Dave Barry will speak immediately before Rosen and Mead, at 9:30 a.m. Thursday. Hopefully he'll address why he's speaking in a bigger room than they are.

This fifth annual event at the Rancho Mirage Library has been sold out since last spring. But the festival will post video of many of the 90 talks at rmwritersfest.org and C-SPAN is covering major ones. So the main things you'll miss in absentia are the crowds, the opportunity to get some great books autographed by the authors, and librarians telling you to silence your cell phones.

I suggest turning off your cell phones while watching C-SPAN to get the festival feel.



Humorist Dave Barry will make three appearances Wednesday and Thursday at the Rancho Mirage Writers Festival. AP