

## Sex, politics are on the table at Miami Book Fair with talks from Erica Jong, Joe Scarborough

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MARICE COHN BAND / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

Erica Jong talks about her mother at the Miami Book Fair International's program: An Evening with Erica Jong in Conversation with Jennifer Weiner, Monday, November 18, 2013, at Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus.

Everybody's favorite topics — sex and politics — were the buzz of the evening at Miami Book Fair International (though not necessarily in that order).

Former Republican congressman Joe Scarborough, now host of MSNBC's Morning Joe, kicked off the second night of the fair, which runs through Sunday at Miami Dade College — and he brought a surprise guest. Mika Brzezinski, the show's cohost, bounded out on the stage with him. Mikes in hand, they proceeded to do that tag-team thing they do every morning while you're savoring your first cup of coffee.

After taking a quick poll on the political makeup of the crowd — more Democrats than Republicans, a smattering of Independents, no

Republicans who would admit voting for President Obama in the last election — the two went on to tease each other and joke about their families. Scarborough, who does a mean Bill Clinton impersonation, said of his parents: "They're so conservative they still think Richard Nixon was framed."

He also said when he interviewed Mika's famous father Zbigniew, the former National Security Advisor for President Jimmy Carter told him, "You are stunningly superficial."

Scarborough is promoting his new book, *The Right Path: From Ike to Reagan, How Republicans Once Mastered Politics — And Can Again* (Random, \$26), and though the lively session provided a lot of laughs, he got serious enough to argue its premise: that for the Republican Party to win elections again it must be "conservative ideologically, moderate temperamentally." He added, "It's kind of hard to win elections when people think you hate them."

In the 1990s, he said, "Everyone hated each other, but they got things done."

Erica Jong, in conversation with novelist Jennifer Weiner, reached further back in time to discuss her groundbreaking work *Fear of Flying*, published in 1973 and just released in a 40th anniversary edition (Holt, \$35). Not everyone coins a new term for a sex act in their first novel, but Jong managed it (and if you don't know what the phrase is, you are not going to read it here).

The book was written at a time when novels by women were “treated as mad housewife novels,” and Jong, and it forced a change in the way the literary world looked at women’s fiction.

Its success also had a profound effect on Jong, not all of it positive: “It appeared that I was the Happy Hooker of literature,” she said. “Fortunately, I had a sense of humor.”

Her family, however, did not: “The family has never really handled it well,” she admitted to Weiner, author of such novels as *Good In Bed*, *In Her Shoes* and *The Next Best Thing*.

Jong said she felt *Fear of Flying* confused some critics when it first appeared.

“I’m a satirist at heart, and somehow that was not understood,” she said.

She can’t quite imagine the book, about the sexual adventures and misadventures of Isadora Wing, being published today. Even after all this time, she said, sexism is “deeply imbedded” in the literary world.