

Mary Matalin and James Carville



WHY THEY MADE HISTORY American political strategists Mary Matalin, a Republican, and James Carville, a Democrat, first rose to national attention when they worked for opposing campaigns during the 1992 presidential election. Matalin and Carville married the following year.

As you read the biographies below, think about the way each person has worked as a political strategist.

MARY MATALIN

1953–present

A Republican political consultant, Mary Matalin is married to Democratic strategist James Carville. Matalin grew up in Illinois and first became involved in local and state politics during her college years. After working on an unsuccessful campaign for U.S. Senate in 1980, Matalin began to work for the Republican National Committee (RNC), where she quickly rose in prominence. She worked on George H. W. Bush's 1988 presidential campaign; after Bush was elected president, Matalin became chief of staff for the RNC.

For President Bush's reelection campaign in 1992, Bush named her his deputy campaign manager for political operations. In that position Matalin was responsible for overseeing the state-level campaign organizations in all 50 states, and she emerged as a vocal advocate for the president during the campaign. Matalin also received media attention for her personal life: She was dating James Carville, the lead strategist for Democrat Bill Clinton's winning presidential campaign. The couple married the year after the election and wrote *All's Fair: Love, War and Running for President*, a book about their perspectives on the 1992 campaign. Despite their political opposition, the couple claims to avoid talking politics at home out of respect for one another's views.

Matalin spent much of the remainder of the 1990s as a television and radio political talk show host before returning to politics in President George W. Bush's administration. She served as an assistant to Bush and as counselor to Vice President Dick Cheney before returning to private life at the end of 2002. Today she runs a publishing house dedicated to publishing conservative political books.

JAMES CARVILLE**1944–present**

A Democratic political consultant and media figure, James Carville is married to Republican strategist Mary Matalin. Before entering politics, Carville attended Louisiana State University; worked for a Baton Rouge, Louisiana, law firm; and served in the U.S. Marines. His first notable political campaign was the 1986 Pennsylvania gubernatorial election, in which he helped Democrat Robert Casey come from behind to win. Casey's election began a string of successful campaigns for Carville, including gubernatorial elections in Kentucky (Wallace Wilkinson, 1987) and Georgia (Zell Miller, 1990) and a U.S. Senate race in New Jersey (Frank Lautenberg, 1988). In 1991 Carville drew national attention when he helped lead Harris Wofford to victory in a U.S. Senate race after Wofford was once down 40 points in opinion polls. Carville's distinctive Louisiana accent and his aggressiveness in political campaigns earned him the nickname the "Ragin' Cajun."

Carville worked as Bill Clinton's campaign manager on the 1992 presidential campaign, leading Clinton to victory over incumbent George H. W. Bush. Carville was one of the subjects of the documentary *The War Room*, a behind-the-scenes look at the Clinton campaign.

After the 1992 election, Carville turned to advising foreign candidates in campaigns, including elections in the United Kingdom, Israel, Canada, and Bolivia. Carville also published a number of books, including *All's Fair*, co-written with his wife, Mary Matalin. He is a frequent guest on political talk shows and works as a consultant and political speaker. He also hosts a weekly radio sports talk show.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **Recall** In what ways has Mary Matalin worked for the Republican Party?

2. **Recall** In what ways has James Carville worked for the Democratic Party?
