

# RAY BRADBURY CONTINUES HIS GREAT LOVE, WRITING

Originally published in *The Blade* on Sunday, February 15, 2009

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Before George Lucas took wishful stargazers to a galaxy far, far away ...

Before Buzz Lightyear urged youthful daydreamers to infinity and beyond ...

Before all of them, there was Ray Bradbury.

Now a titan of the science fiction world, Bradbury made his reputation in the 1950s as the author of futuristic tales that blended social commentary with literary flourishes. He took us on rocket ships to colonize another world in *The Martian Chronicles* and warned of a future where firemen burn books and spurn the written word in *Fahrenheit 451*.

Over the years, Bradbury has turned his imagination to a host of other topics and genres, writing more than 30 books, nearly 600 short stories, and all sorts of poems, essays, and plays. And he's not done yet.

Though he suffered a stroke in 1999, the 88-year-old is still bursting with passion — for life, for the future, and especially for writing. He continues to work with the help of a daughter who takes dictation over the phone, and his newest collection of short stories, *We'll Always Have Paris*, was published earlier this month.

Bradbury, who lives in Los Angeles, recently took some time to speak with *The Blade* by phone about the new book, technological advances, why he never learned to drive, and the greatest love of his life - writing.

**Q: How much are you writing these days?**

A: Every single day of my life, for 70 years.

**Q: What is the process like?**

A: Just like it always was: In the middle of the night, a metaphor jumps around in my head. I wake up and write the metaphor on the back of my hand... When I wake up in the morning, I look at that metaphor and I run to the typewriter. ...

**Q: You mentioned that it's important to write impulsively in the introduction of your new book. Why is that?**

A: It's got to be that way. You mustn't think about what you do. Just do it. That's a good Zen rule. Don't try to do something; do something.

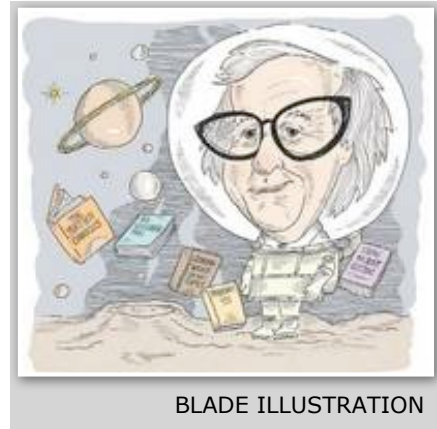
**Q: You have tried to avoid the title of "science fiction writer" in favor of "teller of tales" and I was wondering why that is.**

A: I've never been a writer of science fiction. I write fantasy ideas. I was influenced by Edgar Allan Poe, and he was not a science fiction writer. He was a fantasy writer.

**Q: What is the distinction between the two?**

A: Well, science fiction has to do with changing ideas in machinery and chemistry and things like that.

**Q: You grew up reading science fiction as a youth and became a famous person in the genre ...**



A: I fell in love with H.G. Wells. I read *The Invisible Man*. I saw the film and I wanted to be H.G. Wells. I read Jules Verne. I read *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and Jules Verne affected me. And so that was very important.

I read Edgar Rice Burroughs, all of his Martian books, and when I was 12 years old I couldn't afford to buy the Martian books of Edgar Rice Burroughs so I wrote the sequel myself. My very first book when I was 12 was a Martian book, a sequel to a book by Edgar Rice Burroughs. How about that?

**Q: I've heard that you don't read modern science fiction. Why is that?**

A: No, I don't want to ... I don't have the time. I haven't read science fiction in many years.

**Q: Who do you read now?**

A: I re-read [George] Bernard Shaw, the plays of Bernard Shaw, the essays of Bernard Shaw, the novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald — *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*. He's one of my favorite writers.

**Q: You have dreamed up all sorts of technology for your stories, but you seem to have a big ambivalence to using it all in real life. You never used computers or learned to drive a car. Can you talk a little bit about that?**

A: Well, I didn't learn to drive a car because writers never have any money. ... I was married 10 years before my wife and I bought a car and she learned to drive. I didn't want to learn to drive because I was afraid I'd be a maniac. Men are lousy drivers. Women are the best drivers, so I never wanted to be a driver.

**Q: What about technology in general? Do you embrace it much today?**

A: There's too much Internet stuff. It's dominated too much of our life. We should eliminate that. And computers are a bore. I have three typewriters. I'd rather use a good typewriter than a computer.

**Q: So how do you feel about technological advances? Do you think that they've really advanced us?**

A: Well, there's a hell of a lot of it, of course. They've got hundreds of new inventions there to fill your life up with junk. You've got to be careful not to fill your life up with junk. Simplify your life.

**Q: So many of your stories, including in your new book, leave the reader feeling very uneasy. Do you think of yourself as a pessimist or an optimist?**

A: I'm an absolute optimist. I was on the Walter Cronkite show the night we landed on the moon. I predicted the future. We're going to populate the moon, we're going to go to Mars, we're going to populate Mars, and then we're going to go off to the [star system] Alpha Centauri to live forever. I'm an optimist about our future.

**Q: Are you equally optimistic about human nature?**

A: Listen, we've always done well, haven't we? We have people like President Reagan who said, "Tear down the wall." That's optimistic, isn't it? And it worked, didn't it? He destroyed the wall. He destroyed Russia.

**Q: The poem "America" in your new book begins very optimistically: "We are the dream that other people dream."**

A: That's a true poem. I want people to read that because that's what we are. We are the dream that other people dream.

**Q: Why did you decide to close the book with that piece?**

A: Because my family came here from England. The Bradburys came here. My mother came here from Sweden. We were all immigrants. It's a great future we have.

**Q: How do you feel about versions of your books that have appeared in movies and television?**

A: *The Illustrated Man* was lousy because they did a bad script, but *Something Wicked This Way Comes* was beautiful because they followed my script and I directed part of the film myself.

**Q: What do you think about the other versions of, say, *The Martian Chronicles*?**

A: *The Martian Chronicles* was not very good. That TV series was mainly boring. They had a good cast but the

director was asleep on his feet. A better version is *Fahrenheit 541*. [Director Francois] Truffaut made a very nice film. It's not perfect, but he's got Oskar Werner in the lead and it's got a wonderful score by Bernard Herrmann and the film is beautifully photographed. And the ending of the film is the best ending of any film I've seen in years.

**Q: Are there any more adaptations of your stories on the way?**

A: We're doing a new version of *The Illustrated Man* at Warner Brothers next year. And we're doing a new version of *Fahrenheit 451* next year also, but the plans are up in the air right now and there may be some other versions coming up.

**Q: What interests you these days when it comes to writing?**

A: There's a simple rule to follow I give to every young writer: Write what you love and love what you write. Everything I've done is something I love doing. I love doing it, and I will keep on loving the rest of my life

**Q: Are there certain topics that interest you more today than maybe when you were younger?**

A: I'm going to go on loving writing. I'm writing more plays for the theater. I have three plays opening in California in the next three months. ... I'm going to do more theater. I'm going to do more short stories. I'm going to write more screenplays. So I'm going keep busy. I'm 88 years old, but stand back and get out of the way.

**Q: What compels you to keep writing? Like you said, you're 88.**

A: Because I'm in love. I love being alive. Do you realize, most people don't know I remember being born. I loved every second of my life for the last 88 years. That's true love, isn't it?

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