

FRONTPAGE

A Different Future

A few weeks ago, I walked out of the used bookstore with a copy of Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*. It was a good investment at three bucks. I read it in about two days, grabbing a chapter over my breakfast cereal, a quick lunch, or right before turning out the lights at night. By my rough estimate, it was the tenth time I have read it.

Bradbury, who was recently honored by President Bush with a National Medal of Arts, is the reason I fell in love with writing. But that's not the reason I read this book often.

I am in love with the future.

When Bradbury wrote the first stories that would develop into this book, the United States was just beginning to feel the chills of the Cold War. Set at the dawn of the 21st Century, Bradbury's tales chronicled man's arrival on, and colonization of, Mars. It was easy to love the future then.

But things got in the way of those dreams. Wars, inflation, political infighting, and a thousand other events diverted us from our shiny future.

Along the way a different future occurred.

I doubt even the most prescient of science fiction writers of the 1950s could have envisioned people spread around the country sitting down with an instructor, himself physically separated from the group, to engage in the learning process. (Although I can imagine a futurist thinking that someday man would be trained by machines, which could be a rough definition of e-learning.) But neither Bradbury, nor any of his SciFi brethren, ever considered the constant training that would be necessary to keep the future running smoothly. Learning—whether career-related or as part of one's own personal development—is a vital part of that future.



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