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A Ray of hope

Legendary author tells us his favorite stories

By MICHAEL GILTZ

Who better than author Ray Bradbury to talk about some of his favorite novels? In "Fahrenheit 451," he famously imagined a chilling future in which books were outlawed.

Now 81, Bradbury continues to write, and he's still at the top of his game.

His latest book, "From the Dust Returned" (William Morrow, 208 pages,

\$23), gathers stories he's written from the 1940s to today about the Eternal Family, a

group of vampires (of a sort) and other magical creatures living for centuries in a house in Illinois.

Though the setting is fantastical, the stories are at heart about people — lonely characters who highlight the beauty of family, first loves and what can be the welcome embrace of death.

Mary Zimmerman, who directed the off-Broadway hit "Metamorphoses," is a Bradbury fan.

"I remember reading one story by Ray Bradbury about a place where it's sunny only one day, it always rains and they shut this schoolgirl in a closet," says Zimmerman. "It haunts me to this day."

Bradbury, calling from his home in Los Angeles, which is filled with thousands of books that are piled up in every room, shares some of the books that have haunted him.

Fairy tales: My Aunt

Neva, who was very precious to me — she was like my older sister — gave me a book of fairy tales in 1925 when I was 5, and I still have it here. That book has stayed with me for a lifetime.

All of my books were given to me as gifts at Christmas or birthdays. We had no money, we were a very poor family, and I went to the library and I lived there. I graduated from the library when

I was 28. I never could go to college.

"The Fountainhead" by Ayn Rand:

When I was 24, I was uncertain of my life and my talent and my future. I doubted myself, and I read Ayn Rand's "The Fountainhead." A lot of people make fun of Ayn Rand, and they make fun of "The Fountainhead." But what that book gave me was the courage to be me, the courage to say, "To hell with all the critics, to hell with all the people who doubt me. I've got to go on and do my work."

"The Collected Essays of George Bernard Shaw": He's my hero. It's 2,000 or 3,000 pages, a huge damn thing. But it's got all of the essays from all of his plays (and elsewhere). If you're ever washed up on that desert island and want to have something to read for a whole year and then start over again, it's the one.

"The Complete Poems and Stories of Edgar



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Allan Poe: I've got a huge edition brought out in 1929 with illustrations by Harry Clark. If you can find it, it's gorgeous. It's got dozens of black-and-white illustrations and seven or eight in color. I've got two copies of that, one of them given to me by my aunt. So go and try to find it, because when you see it, you'll hug it to your breast and keep it forever.

"The Collected Poems of Emily Dickinson": A lot of women writers have influenced me. People like Edith Wharton and Willa Cather. I've tried to learn the softer side of my na-

ture. Dickinson was a summer night, a field of wheat filled with fireflies. That's what I loved about her.

"The Immense Journey" by Loren Eiseley: He wrote an essay for Harper's magazine back in 1946, I believe. It was so beautiful that I wrote him a love letter, saying, "Why don't you write a book?" He wrote back to me and said, "I think I will." So, as a result of my kicking him in the butt, he wrote 20 books, and they're all beautiful. He's been dead for 20 years or so, but he should be read and recognized by more people.

"The Wonderful Wiz-

ard of Oz" by L. Frank Baum: The "Oz" books influenced me hugely. I was crazy for them. The thing about being young is that never again in your life are you ever as insane for books as you are when you are 10. I wish I could get that madness back. I still love books, and I still read books. But when you're 10, you jump into them and disappear, don't you?

"Being called to dinner from an "Oz" book is like being called off the field when the sun is going down and you're playing baseball with your brother and you hate to give up, don't you?"