



## Everyday Creativity, by Ruth Richards

I'm rather good at maps. I'm also good at using a GPS device.

But

I forgot the maps and here we were, late afternoon, last day of vacation, my daughter my cousin and I, driving along a two-lane highway in midstate Oregon. No other car in sight, and the sun had just gone down. Where was that charming little village?

It was supposed to be right along this river. We drove on, farther and farther into the unknown, river always at left as our guide. We kept passing farms and fields and scattered houses and now a few lights were coming out. In my head, I was doing a litany of self-criticism: Why didn't we start earlier, leave more time, have lunch sooner, save dessert for the little town, bring the map, and on and on and on, a list of all we did wrong -- reliving it as if that could help us now. My cousin and I were both impatient and stressed. My daughter, at least, was happy in the back seat, text messaging a friend. I pull up on the shoulder of the road to think.

Just then -- WOW! Amazing! A new scene had appeared. A new slide projected on a screen. Where did it come from?

Look! LOOK! I insisted. Even my daughter looked up. Right there, out of nowhere: a magical misty landscape. Fields moving off to infinity in muted purples and pastels, fuzzy in the haze, with clusters of tall lush tress, darkening and receding in the dusk. I turned the car engine off. All was silent in the hot summer air. Beside us a plum-colored river barely moved between a border of trees, its dark lazy water reflecting the last light of day.

How breathtaking! This landscape had cast a spell. We sat in the silence of an indrawn breath. Where had it been? If I had seen even a trace of this beauty while driving along, not a neuron had registered it, no mental bell had rung so that the conscious mind could stop and take a look. I had missed it all. We had all missed it.

We miss a lot, almost everything, in fact, in our world. Our task-focused filters take care of that, selecting only what we need.

We need to get to work. Have some lunch. Find that report. Water the garden. Go out on a date. We see what we need to see, often for purposes of survival -- or survival of the species. Gregory Bateson, speaking of beauty, said aesthetic judgment is selection of a fact.

We create the sight even as we become conscious of it. We do not simply see it. In our daily lives, who or what is doing the selecting?

And why? Is this predetermined? Can we -- in the here and now -- make a change? Can we see further? Can we see better? Can we even better our world?

Opening our vision is a first step in Everyday Creativity.

