

The Blue Ridge Parkway

July 7, 2002

We drove the Blue Ridge Parkway this Fourth of July weekend. It is always a thrill for me. I always feel time spent on the Blue Ridge Parkway is time well spent.

I recognized how much I need beauty in my life. How the pictures of those green valleys and quiet farms and blue mountains fill my soul and prepare me for the harshness of the world. It reminds me why I listen to classical music and opera, and rejoice in an afternoon at the North Carolina Art Museum. That quiet drive reminded me to appreciate anew my simple and beautiful home, and moves me to get out on the lake in the kayak.

The sweet pictures of those green valleys arise when I celebrate how an aesthetic is central to adult learning. Many years ago, the very first graduate course I was to teach at a large university was set in a large, sterile, white-walled classroom. After an hour or so, I said to the group of adult learners: “Sorry, folks, I simply cannot teach in this environment. It belies some of the most important principles of adult learning.” We worked out a plan that took us to a lovely site for the three-hour sessions for the next 13 weeks – they learned and I could teach in a congruent setting.

Wherever possible, consider the aesthetic in your site, in your materials, in your self. See what difference it makes in the learning!