

Weaver finds common thread for life

By CATHERINE VAN HORN
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Ulla Cyrus-Zetterstrom of Sweden has been weaving an ancient art into a profession for more than 50 years. Having taught both hand and machine weaving at Sweden's Textile Institute of Boras for 31 years, Cyrus-Zetterstrom, 71, now analyzes and researches weaving techniques of old textiles.

"I grew up with the smells of wool and yarn," she said, explaining that her father had worked in Sweden's textile industry. "Already when I was 3 years old, I had a small baby loom. At 15, I had my own weaving studio.

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But while many of her contemporaries learned the art of handweaving, few reached the level of expertise mastered by Cyrus-Zetterstrom, who is visiting Portland to lecture on weaving techniques in silks.

Graduating from Handarbetets Vanner — Friends of Handicraft Weaving School — at 20, she began work at that Stockholm school as a handweaving instructor.

When World War II broke out several years later, she decided to leave the school and learn machine weaving in an attempt to contribute to the war effort.

After graduating from the Textile Institute of Boras, where colleagues said she was the first woman to be awarded a diploma in machine-weaving classes, she was hired to teach at the school, becoming the first woman to work there full time.

In addition to teaching, she wrote "The Handbook of Weaving," an internationally recognized book first published in 1950, and she developed her own loom in 1946.



"A student of mine asked me where do I buy a very good loom," she said. "I didn't have good experiences with looms, so I said there is no good loom, but I can make one for you."

Friends of Cyrus-Zetterstrom built a country factory and now have three family generations involved in manufacturing the looms, she said.

Textile research and analysis for various museums now occupies much of Cyrus-Zetterstrom's time. She examines the weave of old materials and tries to reproduce the patterns on her loom, she said.

"This is my specialty," she said, as she pulled imaginary yarn through weaving patterns. "I try to (weave) it

THREADS OF ART — Ulla Cyrus-Zetterstrom of Sweden, a weaver since childhood, is researching old tex-

to look the same. If it doesn't look the same, I have to do it another way, and so on and so on until I find the pattern."

Cyrus-Zetterstrom said she was doing research on silk weaving during China's Han period. To help her studies, she is learning Chinese.

With such dedication to her work, she has earned a worldwide reputation for her expertise.

Additionally, the Chalmers Institute of Technology in Goteborg, Sweden, awarded her the world's first doctorate for the study of weaving techniques.

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tiles to reproduce patterns. The world renowned craftswoman has scheduled Portland lectures.

Cyrus-Zetterstrom spoke Thursday at the Multnomah Art Center on silks in costumes preserved at the Royal Armory in Stockholm. Sunday at 2 p.m. she will be lecturing on silks woven during the Chinese Han period at the Oregon School of Arts and Crafts.