

I have an old picture tacked up on the rough cedar partition next to my loom. It is a black and white photograph that I enlarged from a snapshot and printed out on plain paper. It is not framed or matted, and not even copied on good photo stock. But, I look at it often as I sit and weave.

There is a lot to see in this picture. The focus of the photo is a woman in her sixties or seventies, sitting at a loom, weaving a rug. It is evident that it is not warm in the building where she is working, because she is wearing a dark coat of some heavy material. She is wearing a *huvudkläde*, a white cotton cloth tied around her head with the knot in the back, traditional headgear for Swedish farm women--always when baking, and at most other times as well when they were working at home. Below the hem of her coat one can see that her cotton house dress was striped, probably blue and white or green and white.

The loom was hand made, and the heddles through which the warp threads passed were hand knotted. The long shuttle around which her weaving material was wrapped consisted of a thin piece of wood--probably pine or birch--with half moon sections removed from each end, making it easy to keep the carpet rags in place.

It appears that the rug she was weaving was light colored cotton with darker stripes in each end and possibly in the middle as well. Behind her on a wooden box are the balls of rags from which she was constructing her pattern. They are mostly light in hue, but there are also some in a medium shade of color and one very dark ball. I wish I could see more of her pattern.

In the original snapshot, the wooden box showed nothing to distinguish itself from any old wooden box. But, in the enlarged copy, it is easy to read the printing on the box. *EXPLOSIV VARA* is stamped in large letters. This sturdy wooden container had held dynamite.

The unfinished wood walls show that this is a storage building where grain, nonperishable foodstuffs, and other items were kept in a rodent-free environment. Such buildings were usually built on stone pillars to keep them safe from invasion by mice and other nuisance animals.

The woman in the picture is Frida Andersson--Rut Alfrida was her given name--Runo's maternal grandmother. This is a woman for whom I had the greatest respect. When I knew her, she was no longer weaving, milking, carrying hay, or doing any of the other chores that had been her responsibility. She was still knitting socks for the home folks, and she enjoyed sitting by the sunny kitchen window on her chair that had been modified by her brother-in-law. He had extended the legs of a regular kitchen chair to make it easier for her to get up and down with knees worn out from hard physical labor.

Frida had been widowed four years after her marriage to Anders Andersson. She was left on their small farm as the sole breadwinner for herself and their two year old daughter. She kept two cows, a few sheep, and probably some hens as well, and she managed to provide what was absolutely necessary to sustain herself and her daughter. Most people today could not fathom the difficulties of her life, and yet, she lived into her eighties with spirits intact. That, to me, was remarkable evidence of a strong character that was not conquered by a hard life.