Submitted by Gregory R Pflaumer on October 2, 2019 - 3:09pm

Syrene is a retired teacher, who taught at Roosevelt High School in Seattle for twenty-five years. She taught Swedish, English, drawing, painting, basic language arts, social studies, international literature, and creative writing. Syrene grew up the daughter of Swedish-Finns who always encouraged her to learn Swedish and to follow her passion for art. Walter Johnson, her mentor and professor in the Scandinavian Studies Department, encouraged Syrene to take education courses and provided support, such as arranging interviews. He also arranged a grant for her to adapt a first year Swedish textbook for high school students. A visiting professor in the department arranged a grant for twelve teachers of Swedish language across the U.S., including Syrene, to travel to Scandinavia on a guided tour of educational resources, including several universities and libraries. She recalls the Scandinavian Studies Department was “like having a family/home.” While a teacher, Syrene took part in a program organized by the Swedish government to offer Swedish classes during the summer for immigrant families at a community college - she attended along with her two young daughters. She also attended the ex-patriot parliament in Finland for years and helped to pass dual citizenship laws in Finland. Syrene served on the Advisory Board of the Scandinavian Studies Department for twenty years, and she and her husband recently established a $25,000 scholarship for students at UW studying Swedish-Finn topics, broadly defined.