

Laura J. Cooper

Five Times a Visiting Professor in Uppsala

I appear to be unique among Minnesota faculty exchange participants for having taught in Uppsala five times—2000, 2002, 2006, 2013, and 2017. Why did it take me so long to take part in an exchange that had started in 1983? Why did my visits start in 2000? And why, once I started, did I return so many times?

In the early years of the exchange, I enjoyed meeting visiting faculty from Uppsala, and hearing my Minnesota colleagues' stories of the pleasures of their visits, but I assumed that my academic, professional, and family responsibilities were incompatible with living in Sweden for several months. That all changed, though, with an unexpected development. In December of 1997, Uppsala Professor Åke Frändberg was then nearing the conclusion of his Minnesota visit, accompanied by his wife, Viveca, and their children Peter and Louise. Three Frändbergs were about to return to Sweden, but Louise, attending a Minneapolis high school, hoped to stay with a law faculty family to finish the academic year at her school. Meredith McQuaid sent an email to the Minnesota faculty seeking a family with whom Louise might stay until June. We realized immediately that ours was just the family Meredith was hoping to find. Louise's high school was walking distance from our home, and we had a guest bedroom on our first floor with a private bathroom. The only possible remaining question was how our sixteen-year-old son, an only child, would feel about a young woman (Louise was to turn 18 early in January) moving into his house for six months. Once we posed the question to Tim, his quick answer, to the idea of a beautiful young Swedish girl living with us, was essentially: "Are you kidding? Of course, that would be great!" We thoroughly enjoyed Louise's visit. We loved hearing her stories



Louise Frändberg with Ben, Laura, and Tim Cooper, 1998.

at the dinner table as she told us about her classes and the misbehavior of her male classmates. Under other circumstances, she might have been less willing to tolerate the company of a younger boy, but Tim had a new driver's license and access to a car. Louise probably appreciated a brief respite from parental oversight and we never had to tell Åke and Viveca that we permitted her to eat her favorite Froot Loops (see "Froot Loops" in Wikipedia) for breakfast (artificially colored and flavored sweetened cereal) instead of a good healthy traditional Swedish breakfast.

We eagerly accepted an invitation from the Frändbergs to visit them in Uppsala in the summer of 1998 after Louise had returned to Sweden. They were wonderful hosts and introduced us to the many delights of Uppsala and its environs that we would later share with our many friends and family who came to visit us in Sweden. I can remember vividly these first visits to places like Gamla Uppsala, Sigtuna, the Uppsala Cathedral, University buildings, and Skokloster Castle, enhanced by Åke and Viveca's enthusiastic Swedish pride and their deep knowledge of Swedish history and culture.

Back home, after such a wonderful introduction to Swedish life, we quickly realized that, once Tim was away from home in college, Ben

and I could, with some creativity, manage our U.S. commitments from a distance to allow us to come to Uppsala on the exchange. I was excited when I learned that I could be Minnesota's Uppsala visitor for Spring 2000, a time that was special to us because it would permit us to be there for Louise's Swedish graduation.

In retrospect, my 2000 visit was a mixture of great delights and great challenges. I had little time between finishing my classes in Minnesota and starting to teach a course I'd never taught before in an unfamiliar academic system. In April, I was just beginning to understand how to navigate both my responsibilities of teaching and adapting to daily life in Sweden when Ben had to return to the U.S. to be with his mother in her final days. I was still early in learning things new to me, like how to manage communal laundry rooms, complex recycling rules, and grocery shopping without the benefit of a car. My office was in a building with few law faculty members, so it was hard to meet colleagues. As it turned out, Ben wasn't able to return until my time in Sweden was almost over in June, but we did both joyously get to attend Louise's graduation and felt much honored at her graduation party when Viveca introduced us as "Louise's American Parents."

I remain grateful for all the advice and assistance I received from Uppsala faculty colleagues, graduate students, student assistants, and other law school staff members (particularly secretaries and IT professionals) on that first visit. I remember, with deep gratitude, Uppsala faculty members and their families who recognized my isolation that spring and offered concrete assistance, friendship, and much-needed advice and direction. I really appreciated the invitations I received to attend family meals and formal dinner parties, and to go on outings to see more of the Uppsala area. I especially recall the generosity at that time of Bengt Lindell and Jane Stoll; Åke and Viveca Frändberg; Elisabeth and Jan Rynning; and Mats and Eva Kumlien. Many others introduced me to their favorite places for dagens lunch and answered my constant questions.

To plan the substance of the Introduction to American Law course, and the teaching methods I would use in 2000, I learned from Minnesota faculty who had previously taught the course. Each time I returned to Uppsala in later years, I made incremental changes to better reflect my own teaching style and academic interests. The course was designed, in part, as a comparative law course—to develop students' understanding of a distinct legal system. The professors from Minnesota had always taught the course using the "Socratic method," historically used in U.S. law



Åke, Viveca, and Louise Frändberg at Cooper apartment in Uppsala.

schools, in which students were expected to come to class having read the assigned material (largely court cases decided by common law reasoning and employing a method of statutory interpretation heavily influenced by the common law method). As part of that pedagogy, professors would spontaneously select students at random to respond to the professor's questions about the cases the students had read. I tried using that method initially. I soon recognized that the method was not only unfamiliar to the students, but also often anxiety producing. It was especially challenging for exchange students whose English language skills were not as good as those of Swedish students. I adapted the method to provide students with questions in advance.

Besides preparing for class sessions, and speaking regularly in class, students were assigned other tasks. Each week, they submitted short journals reflecting on what they had learned that week and what had surprised them, or raised new questions for them, about U.S. law. They submitted three longer written assignments—briefing a case (a highly structured summary of a court case), using an online U.S. legal database (Westlaw) to answer multiple research questions, and writing a short legal memorandum articulating an answer to a legal question by synthesizing specific facts, a statute, and a few specified court decisions. The last time I taught the course, in 2017, with the assistance of two lawyer-friends visiting from the U.S., I was pleased to be able to add a simulation in which students participated in both the arbitration and mediation of a hypotheti-

cal case to experience directly the differences between the two dispute resolution methods and observe their advantages and disadvantages. The Introduction to American Law students also took a many-hour proctored written final examination in the Uppsala law school tradition.

Each time I taught the course gave me new reasons to want to come back to Uppsala and do it again. I thoroughly enjoyed the interaction with the students and the ability to learn about the legal systems in which they were being educated and compare them to my own. I expanded my own understanding of U.S. law by teaching parts of U.S. substantive law that I'd never taught in the U.S. Often the students would ask why U.S. law was so different, as it sometimes was, from the law in their own countries. Their questions challenged me to think anew about U.S. history and legal culture to frame answers. They asked provocative questions like: "Why does the U.S. rely on a 1787 Constitution while other countries rely on constitutions better reflecting contemporary life and issues?" "Are you saying that the Uniform Commercial Code is not uniform and not a code?" (Yes, it would make more sense if the UCC were a federal statute uniformly applied in all states.) "Why does the Supreme Court read the U.S. Constitution to permit seriously harmful communication and expression as free speech?" "Why do U.S. states have more autonomy on some issues than countries do within the EU?"

Answering students' questions made vivid to me how much the peculiarities of U.S. law can be traced back to the American revolution against Great Britain and the U.S.'s own Civil War. I recall discussions with students that demonstrated that, although many countries share the common goal of eliminating discrimination and remedying racial and ethnic disparities, they rely on quite different, and sometimes totally opposite, legal approaches.

As we left Sweden in June 2000, we immediately knew that we wanted to return as soon as we could. Ben and I had missed most of what would have been our time together in Sweden and we'd amassed a long list of things we wanted to do and see there. I was eager to continue the friendships that had been started, and wanted Ben to get to know the people who had been so helpful to me in his absence. With the benefit of my initial experience teaching the Introduction to American Law course, I hoped to redesign some of the course materials and methodology. We felt truly fortunate to be able to return in the spring of 2002.

After our second visit to Uppsala, Ben and I realized that we could assist future Minnesota faculty visitors by writing down all the things we

had learned in our two visits about adapting to, and enjoying, life in Sweden. Our 2002 “Uppsala Guide” offered, in 11 pages of 12-point type, information about such things as course administration, what to bring, immigration rules, bus and train transportation, grocery shopping, laundry room rules, recycling procedures, and where to find English-language books (in those days before there were electronic options). After each of our subsequent visits, we updated the Uppsala Guide, including favorite places to visit around Uppsala and in Stockholm, and an explanation of how it was possible to head for the airport to depart Sweden at the end of the visit while also leaving the apartment spotlessly clean in compliance with the detailed requirements of the University Housing Office. The final 2017 version was 16 pages long in 10-point type. After a few visits, we started, at the end of our visits, to pack into inventoried boxes to leave with the law school for future Minnesota visitors the supplemental household goods we had bought on our visits—things we anticipated other Americans might appreciate, such as ice cube trays, a measuring cup with U.S. measurements, and a bathroom scale.

In 2004, we bought a Volvo for delivery in Gothenberg. Having a car allowed us to tour parts of Sweden we hadn’t been able to see before and to renew faculty friendships. It was a special treat to receive an invitation to visit Elisabeth and Jan Rynning at their summer home in Öregrund, and to visit the home of Maja and Kjell Eriksson in Västerås.

Teaching in 2002, and visiting in 2004, made me even more eager to visit again, which we did in 2006, 2013, and 2017. These were wonderful visits and allowed us to deepen friendships, learn more about Swedish history and culture, and explore new places. Ben studied with voice teachers in Uppsala and Stockholm, and learned enough Swedish songs to perform solo recitals in Minneapolis at the American Swedish Institute (ASI) and the Mindekirken Norwegian Church. Now, eight years since our last visit to Sweden, Ben still listens regularly to Swedish radio news on the web to maintain his Swedish language skills. You can get a sense of how much we told our friends and family about the delights of Sweden and Uppsala by the number of them who came from the U.S. to visit us there. I can count at least 15 of our friends and family members who visited us in Uppsala, including a few who came twice! Uppsala friends generously entertained our visitors from the U.S. including a many-stop May Day tour of Stockholm with Jan Darpö, and a day when Bertil and Helene Wiman opened their Mälaren home (and kitchen cabinets, refrigerator, root cellar, and garden) to our Minneapolis neighbor accom-



Baltic island with Elisabeth and Jan Rynning.



Viking mounds with Erikssons.



Darpö May Day Fika with Coopers and U.S. Friend.



Valborg Photo of Bertil Wiman. Laura at Wimans' Valborg Party. Coopers in formal dress before dinner at the castle 2002.

panying a Minnesota culinary author studying Swedish food culture for the ASI. (I still laugh at Bertil's ability, on the drive from the Knivsta train station, to convince our visitors—briefly—that Skokloster was his home to which we were headed.)

Over our many visits we were overwhelmed with the hospitality of our faculty friends and their spouses. They took us on outings to their lesser-known favorite places, invited us to their summer homes, and made it possible for us to experience special events, such as a formal spring dinner at the Värmlands Nation, the doctoral graduation, the graduation dinner at Uppsala Castle, Orphei Drängar concerts, and many Valborg celebrations.

In our five visits on the exchange, and two independent trips to Uppsala, Ben and I were the beneficiaries of truly countless opportunities to explore treasured places in Sweden with faculty members and their families. On one outing in 2015 with Gabriel Michanek and Sofia Widell we went to a medieval market fair, saw Wik Castle, and ended the day with a beautiful dinner in their garden. In 2017, they showed us their favorite places in Grisslehamn. After hearing so much from Jan Darpö about his love for his summer home on Öland, we were delighted that we were able to visit him there in 2015. The Kumliens introduced us to the extraordinary murals of the Härkeberga Church and brought us on a tour of a private grand manor house, Grönsöo Slott, guided by its ancestral owner.

The final days of our last visit to Uppsala were extra special. As I had formally retired from the University of Minnesota Law School in May



Mats and Eva Kumlien at Grönsö Castle.



Michanek-Widell Garden Dinner.



Laura at final class 2017.

2017, my last class in Uppsala was the last law school class I taught in my forty-two-year career. I was surprised and honored by the students presenting me in that last class, on May 18, with a bouquet of flowers.

The days' celebratory events continued as we, and even our last set of U.S. guests, were invited to the Law Faculty's spring dinner where Ben had been invited to sing some of his Swedish songs and then, he too, was the recipient of a flower bouquet.



*Ben with flowers at faculty dinner
2017.*

I had experienced, in 2000, the challenges of simultaneously learning how to navigate daily life in a different country and to teach in an unfamiliar legal educational culture. I recognized that I had sometimes felt reluctant to ask for help or to take the initiative to make new personal connections. Knowing that the Swedish visitors who came to Minnesota might face similar challenges, I wanted to be of help when they came here and to return the generous hospitality, as best I could, that I had received from Uppsala faculty and their spouses. Having gained some understanding about cultural differences between our two countries, I was better prepared to identify and explain to Swedish visi-

tors some of the ways in which U.S. customs varied from those in Sweden so that they might avoid unsettling surprises. Sometimes we conducted tours of local grocery stores, much as Swedish hosts had provided to us in Uppsala, or helped someone with transportation or household goods, as Swedish hosts had done for us. I also realized that I was as much a booster of Minneapolis as the Uppsala faculty was of their own community, so that I wanted to show visitors the places and events here that I most enjoy.

I recall fondly spending Thanksgiving holiday dinners with the entire Kumlien family and with Maja Eriksson, her daughter Maria, and some Swedish law students. With Bengt Lindell, we visited Lindström, the small Minnesota town that calls itself “America’s Little Sweden.” I remember when Torben Spaak’s wife, Monica Björnfot (a judge), and I spent a day together observing proceedings in multiple state and federal courts in Minneapolis and she ended up with a souvenir mug from a federal judge and the definite misimpression that I knew all the lawyers and judges in town. We walked all the way across a frozen Lake Harriet with Rebecca Stern and her family on a cold sunny January day to experience a whimsical art installation and a colorful kite festival. Not unlike the unexpected events that brought Louise Frändberg to stay in our guest room,

Jan Darpö came to live there for several weeks at the start of his visit here in 2008 when his apartment was not initially available. Jan was a splendid guest and we were buoyed by his enthusiasm to go to new places and learn new things (although we did not share his appreciation of our neighborhood grey squirrels which may be a novelty to Swedes but a nuisance to local homeowners). It was during his visit that we were privileged to host a dinner reception at our home on a warm September evening for Minnesota and Swedish faculty members participating in a seminar program and other events in celebration of the exchange.

I am filled with appreciation for the academic leaders in Minneapolis and Uppsala who had the vision to create the exchange and have done the hard work and problem-solving over more than forty years to allow it to continue and flourish and to make it such a robust academic and personal experience for all of us who have participated. I am grateful for the many gifts it brought to me. Ben and I hope to come back soon to again see Sweden and our friends.



*Bengt Lindell in Lindstrom,
Minnesota.*