



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



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www.ne-rugsociety.org

September Meeting: John Collins Exhibition and Lecture on South Persian Tribal Rugs

Our first meeting of the new season will be held at John Collins's beautiful gallery in historic Newburyport. John, who is a well known dealer and long-standing NERS member, has sent us the following information:

"I will be talking about three types of South Persian tribal rugs: Afshar, Qashqa'i and Khamseh Federation. I will discuss technical characteristics, design vocabularies and aesthetics. The gallery will be hung with dozens of examples from area collectors and myself. I will try to keep my remarks to 15 minutes per group, but I will also have some written material for anyone who wishes to take it with them. We can certainly have a 'show and tell' if the members desire."

When John last addressed an NERS meeting on 9/12/97, we had the following (with slight updates) to say about him:

"Like many dealers, John started out as a collector. Eventually, his growing inventory and shifting tastes induced him to start selling, and he opened

September Meeting Details (Note unusual time and location!)

Date: Sunday, September 21

Time: 2:30PM

Place: Collins Gallery, 11 Market Square, Newburyport, MA

Note: \$5 guest fee for non-members

Directions and parking: See page 14

his first gallery in Newburyport in 1979. Since then, he has held many exhibitions and published a number of catalogs, mostly relating to South Persian tribal and village weavings. He has also published articles in *Oriental Rug Review*, and has addressed many rug societies and conferences, including several ACOR sessions.

We are confident that this affair will be a special treat for all members attending. Refreshments will be served.

October Meeting: Betsy Sterling Benjamin on "The World of Rozome: Wax Resist Textiles of Japan"

Our October meeting is devoted to an unfamiliar (to most of us), though fascinating, subject. No one knows just how or when ancient people first discovered that wax has the power to prevent dye from penetrating cloth. But around the world and for more than a thousand years, textiles patterned with wax resist have been highly prized, chosen to decorate churches or designate the highest rank in a community. Today wax resist is still honored as an art form in its own right. This development is thanks largely to the outstanding work being done by Japan's wax resist, or *rozome*, artists. **Continued on page 16**

October Meeting Details

Date: Friday, October 24

Time: 7:30PM

Place: First Parish, Bedford Road, Lincoln

Note: \$5 guest fee for non-members

Directions and parking: see page 16

Please note that the guest fee at our meetings has been reduced from \$10 to \$5!

Report on Washington ICOC coming up in next issue

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME! Please send your dues by September 10



April Meeting: Bertram Frauenknecht on “Collecting through the Eyes of a Dealer”

By Jim Adelson

On April 4, Bertram Frauenknecht entertained a large group at Skinner amidst the many pieces hanging for the next day’s auction. Bertram intertwined anecdotes from his 30+ years in the rug field with a number of observations about rug collecting.

He started with the introduction “We all have a few stories about how we got into rugs I met a beautiful woman in Munich She invited me to meet her parents, and her uncle who had a collection of Caucasian rugs I was bitten immediately by the bug.” The mixture of rugs and women was a recurrent theme. Bertram commented that there are a lot more men among collectors than women, and went on to note that, according to Jungian theory, men look for their female part, and tribal rugs are almost all made by women, so men are particularly intrigued with the symbols in them.

Bertram’s first rug purchases as a collector came in Morocco in 1969. He bought a blanket, and a skirt for his wife. Frequent Middle Eastern trips followed. Bertram showed a picture of a Turkmen torba with what’s known as the Shemle design, relating that “I spent all afternoon bargaining down from \$8 to \$4; I came back to Germany and was offered \$50 for it.” Bertram presented a number of pictures from his trips in the early 1970s, showing nomads, rough roads, and ruin-strewn landscapes. In particular, he included shots from the Moghan Steppe, with instances of water transport, since camels have to haul water as much as 30-40 miles. He also showed pictures of sheep-shearing; this activity was done by men, while women spun the wool and wove the pieces. He indicated that the weavers sometimes used a design for reference in their weaving, but it was often quite amazing to watch them weave something much different than what was in front of them.

Bertram asked the rhetorical question “How does a collection start to become a collection?” First, you buy something that you like. Then, you get a book. Then, as you go along, you begin to realize that you made some mistakes. You learn a lot from

these decisions, so they are not really mistakes.

Bertram outlined his personal history, and the interaction between collecting and dealing. With his growing interest in rugs, he became a full-time dealer in 1976. By 1980-1981 he realized that he couldn’t both collect and deal. His customers said (or at least felt) “you always keep the best pieces.” So, at that point he divided his existing collection between himself and his wife, and ceased collecting for himself. Bertram illustrated a number of the pieces from his wife’s collection, to indicate what he had been acquiring at the time. The examples included a Shahsavan reverse soumak bag, Jaf Kurd bags, ikat, and Shahsavan mafrash panels.

Speaking once more about collecting in general, Bertram recommended “The thing about collecting is, if you really want to grow, you have to read books not just look at pictures, but read, even if it’s wrong, and most of it is wrong.” In Bertram’s view, that’s how you come up with your own ideas. As an example of how unreliable the information in books can be, Bertram said that when Schurmann wrote his book on Caucasian rugs in 1962, he used a lot of names for the rug types, and nobody knows whether they are correct. It’s not sure where

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**Bertram Frauenknecht at Skinner
(picture by Tom Hannaher)**



April Meeting: “Collecting Through the Eyes of a Dealer”

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Schurmann got his information—there’s some speculation that he got his information from an Armenian repairman in London. For other authors, too, there was the problem of being too remote in time, if not in place and source, from their material. Bertram cited Kerimov and Moshkova as being too detached from what they were writing about to be knowledgeable and confident about the names or symbolic interpretations that they were presenting. In the case of symbolic meaning, Bertram said that most of the time the authors and even the people they were interviewing were too removed from an understanding of the symbols to correctly explain them. He gave a counter-example from Central Africa. In that case, field interviews were done in 1910, just six years after the Belgian conquest. Then, perhaps, the symbols were understood by the weavers, but by now this understanding has disappeared there. In Bertram’s view, for tribal rugs from the Middle East, the first-hand familiarity with the symbols’ meaning and use has disappeared entirely.

Returning to general comments on collecting, Bertram noted that comparison is critical. “When you compare, you’ll find out what the better piece is, unless you don’t know what a better piece is ... A prototype is not necessarily the most beautiful piece.” He showed examples, comparing earlier pieces and later ones with the Lesghi star design in both soumak and pile as his theme. He also looked at Shahsavan bags, with the so-called crab or beetle design, where he commented, “They were very rare, and very expensive; now, about 40 examples are known, and they’re still very expensive” because it’s such an appealing design. He noted, “Never complain about paying too much—it’s always a good lesson.” Despite his remark about prototypes not necessarily being the most beautiful, he went on to say “When you keep collecting, and keep learning, the late 19th

century is not interesting anymore ... You want mid-19th century, or early 19th century, or even 18th century.”

Bertram also urged collectors to publish their pieces, including structural analyses and informed discussions of the pieces, so that collectors and scholars could learn what was out there. He noted that the information available to collectors has grown dramatically in the last 20-30 years; before that, you could only get dealer stories. “Information is the most important part of building a good collection.”

Bertram also counseled, “Look at a map; find out where the people lived, and what happened there when they lived there.” He showed a number of pictures of Zoroastrian culture, which had preceded the arrival of Islam, and the architecture, symbols, and practices of Zoroastrians, as explanation for what influenced their artwork.

Circling again to another aspect of collecting, Bertram commented on value. Part of it he attributed to rarity. In an auction setting, value is established by what two people are willing to bid, which may or may not make sense. Because of the high price of the most highly esteemed pieces, fragments became more fashionable from the early 90s on. He illustrated this with a number of examples from the Kirchheim collection.

Bertram closed with another set of photos of the middle eastern landscape and daily practices. “For us here, it’s basically impossible to imagine how these people live.” The same people still live in that setting, but greatly removed from the weavers whose work we admire. His final picture showed an older woman; “Maybe this woman, or her great, great, great grandmother, made your favorite piece.”

Bertram’s talk had originally been scheduled and then cancelled in mid September, 2001. Our thanks to Bertram for his continued willingness to talk to the group, and to Skinner for hosting the event.

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Comments/contributions/for sale ads to: Yonathan Bard, doryon@rcn.com



Last Meeting: Picnic, Moth-Market, and Show & Tell

By Jim Adelson

We thank Julia Bailey and Ed Berkhoff for providing the photos accompanying this report. More pictures can be seen in full color on our website, www.ne-rugsociety.org.

On May 10th, NERS held its much-anticipated annual Show & Tell session. Weatherwise, the day was as idyllic and inviting as last season's freak snow-storm and cancellation had been brutish and unwelcome. We're back on the winning trail!

The Moth Market got off to a quick start. Six minutes into the event, one new acquirer was already pressing pen to checkbook. There were a number of dealers and collectors, selling commercially or financing their next acquisition. The pieces on offer varied immensely, with a number of pre-Columbian items, multiple South Persian pieces, several small Turkmen items including Yomud chuvals and an Ersari-Beshir torba, Caucasian pile and flatwoven pieces, and varied Anatolian items. One of the most unusual weavings was a saddle cover of some sort with two pommel holes. The offerings also included a number of non-woven items, from ethnographic artifacts to rug auction catalogs. Happily, a number of these items went home in different hands and vehicles than the ones in which they had arrived.

A relaxed lunch and pleasant conversation led to a new first—the Show & Tell session held outdoors in the perfect weather and bright sunlight. Rosalie Rudnick got us off to a great start with a



The Rudnicks with Uzbek(?) door rug

very graphic door rug fragment which was hard to attribute with certainty, but may have been Uzbek in origin. The piece had large-scale forms, probably floral in origin, set off against a white field, with an archaic trefoil border.

Next up was Jim Adelson's spaciouly drawn Yomud lattice asmalyk. Jim advanced the notion that early asmalyks, perhaps mid-19th century or earlier, can be read as a colored lattice overlaid on an ivory background, while later, more crowded versions of the design lose this design aspect, and the white is reduced to just a highlight surrounding each gul in the field. This particular asmalyk also had a striking green border, with aubergine ashiks and electric blue smaller elements.

Welcome guest Samy Rabinoviç presented two Anatolian pieces. The first he attributed to Western Anatolia, likely Melas. The central, narrow field had a tobacco leaf design drawn in a typical Melas style and with a Melas color palette. But the borders around the central field were what really distinguished this piece with designs not usually seen in Anatolian weaving, labelled Greek by Samy. His second piece came from Gaziantep, with a triple medallion design. Samy speculated on a possible Armenian involvement, based on the blue wefts, as well as Kurdish influences in the design—a puzzling combination.

After these last pieces that required “holders,” Mae Festa easily carried her two items under one arm. The first was a Jaf Kurd bagface, with the characteristic diamond medallion field, and an attractive rosette border. The second was a torba of uncertain origin—Mae mentioned both Karakalpak and Kirghiz as possibilities.

Yon Bard brought a couple of stellar examples from his Turkmen collection. The first was a large Salor chuval, with the characteristic three turret guls and “box and stars” minor gul. While the form was traditional, the terrific wool quality and condition, the absence of frequently-found silk, and the spacious drawing of the elem figures made this example

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stand out even from high-quality Salor brethren in the literature. Yon's second piece was a *chaval* fragment, most likely Saryk, with the same large-scale turret gul, but a different and very unusual secondary gul—likely descended from small-pattern Holbein carpets. The Saryk attribution came from the use of symmetric knotting.

Jim Adelson came back with a second piece, moving a little further east than many Turkmen groups to an urban weaving—a complete *ikat chapan*. The design of this particular *ikat* is pictured on the cover of *Hali 27*, where it is attributed to Bukhara, although the more recent Goldman book attributes the design instead to Samarkand. The design consisted of a yellow and white background, with green, blue, and aubergine design forms in the foreground, all with the characteristic egg-wash sheen.

We moved on to a new continent, with Gillian Richardson showing a Bolivian panel. The piece was from the Amara, probably woven in the 1920s or 1930s. The weaving technique was complementary warp—warps of two different colors are either in front or in back, yielding a design on one side and the exact same design in reverse colors on the other side. Gillian's second piece was a Bilum purse or



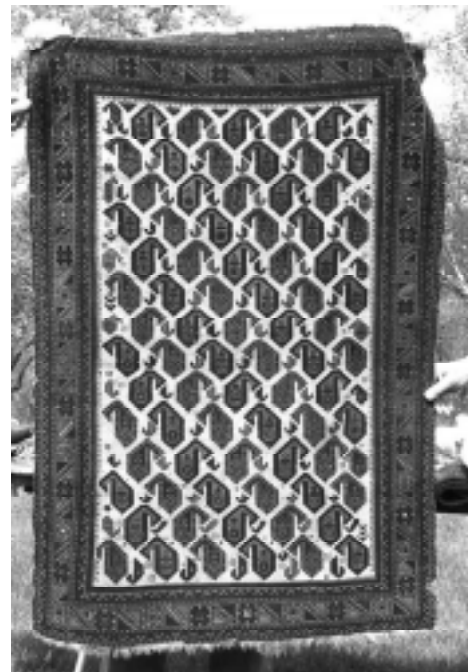
Mitch Rudnick modeling Jim Adelson's *ikat* coat

bag from Papua-New Guinea, with two prominent colors. The colors do not come from dyeing, but from taking orchid stems and wrapping them around the fibers before weaving the latter into the piece. This particular style of weaving is truly a disappearing art—when Gillian visited the area and acquired the piece, supposedly only one woman was still weaving this type of bag.

Next came a flurry of Baluch pieces. Ed Berkhoff exhibited a prayer rug with a simple, striking, zig-zag stripe decorating both the field and the hand panels. Severe oxidation of the brown gave a sculpted feel to the pile. This piece had been part of the NERS on-line exhibit of prayer rugs—take a look at #20. Ed's second piece was a small Baluch carpet with a conventional, rectangular field, with rows of *botehs* on the white ground. Ed observed that white ground pieces are uncommon. In addition to the main *boteh* design element, the weaver used a smaller version as a secondary—Ed labelled these “*botettes*.”

Mark Hopkins followed with a Baluch small rug of his own. This piece had major guls of Turkmen origin—apparently based on the Gurbaghe design used as a minor gul on Tekke pieces. The color palette was unusual for a Baluch, with a chestnut background and a strong blue-green, among other colors. (Later on, Mark returned with another polychrome Baluch, and the comment “I'm just showing you that not all Baluches are colorless.”) Al Saulnier finished off the Baluch run with a pile piece that had kilim ends decorated with designs in supplementary weft.

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Ed Berkhoff's Baluch *boteh* rug



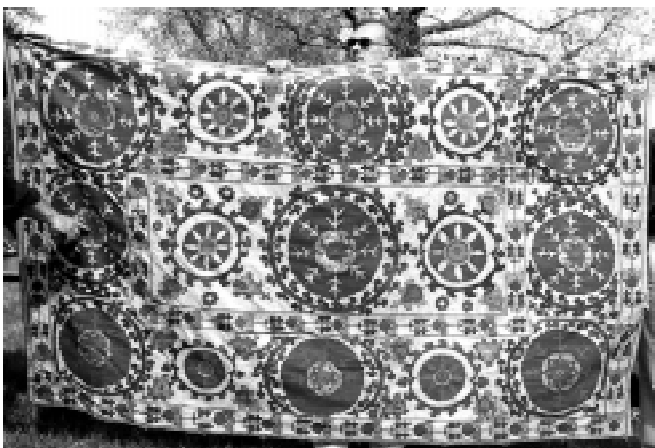
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And for a second piece, Al brought an Ouaouzquite weaving from the Moroccan tradition that he knows so well.

Next came a couple of unusual and instructive comparisons. Ron Newburgh had two Jaf Kurd bagfaces with many common design elements, but the interesting thing was that the two pieces were dramatically different in size, which naturally affected how the design was rendered. Deb Gott followed with a susani, and was joined by Julia and Doug Bailey who had brought two susanis from their own collection. Julia explained that the name susani comes from the word for needle, which makes sense since susanis are such complex and appealing embroideries. The three examples showed some of the different design vocabularies, since Deb's was from the Bukhara area, while one of the Baileys' was from Tashkent.

Ralph Bradburd's small torba/large mafrash of Yomud origin came next, sporting excellent color. The main field featured diagonal rows of two different elements, which is one of the more popular approaches to the design of these smaller weavings, but the specific elements included one very rare gul together with the more commonly encountered Erre gul. The next piece out of the shrinking but still substantial pile was Rich Blumenthal's South Persian weaving. Rich indicated it might be either a khorjin face or a mafrash end panel—it wasn't clear.



Deb Gott's susani

The piece had a classic Jaf Kurd design, but executed on a much smaller scale.

Carl Strock then took us to another weaving area, with a couple of pieces from the Phillipines. The first was a Filipino men's ceremonial cape. Carl indicated that the active material culture that produced this cape has pretty much come to an end; he commented, "You see a lot more Chicago Bulls jerseys." Carl's second piece, called a gadang, was a man's loin cloth—suggestion of this usage was greeted with some question and even disbelief. From a structural/design standpoint, the piece was woven using a warp-faced weave.

Wayne Barron brought two Anatolian pieces, both from the Melas region. The first was a conventionally formatted small rug, with the appealing Melas palette; the second a prayer rug, with a great open field and border. Wayne and others were somewhat uncertain about the Melas attribution for the second piece.

NERS newcomer Thomas Mond brought two pieces from Tibet, his particular focus of knowledge, collecting, and dealing. The first was a runner from the mid-19th century, with medallions tranquilly placed on a solid field. The second was a sleeping carpet. This wider rug employed a very curious technique—it was constructed from pieced foundations that were embroidered together. Thomas labelled the main design the "frog's foot."

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Thomas Mond's Tibetan runner



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Tom Hannaher had two pieces. The first was probably the most baffling rug of the day's event, with designs on a very open, plain field, and nothing resembling a conventional border. The rug had been in Tom's family since 1974—it came from his grandmother's house. Tom indicated that there were a number of theories about the rug's origin: some said Ushak (Anatolian), others pointed to North Africa, and a third contingent were inclined towards a Central Asian origin. Tom's second piece came from the South American areas that represent the focus of his collecting. It was a Chancay piece (illustrated on page 10 of the 3/20/03 newsletter), with the design painted on cloth. Tom explained that it was half of the full panel, and also that there was much debate about whether it was fake or real. He observed that the design was known as the staff deity design, with the main figure wearing a crown and carrying one or more staffs. The main figure was depicted forward-facing in this example; they are also shown in profile on some pieces.

Our next "exhibitor" was Jeff Spurr. Befitting his collecting interests, Jeff had two textiles from remote corners of the world untouched by any of the previous NERS members. His first piece was a silk

shoulder cloth, most likely from Madagascar, and probably woven around 1900. One portion had a striking white-on-white design, while another section was polychrome. Jeff's second piece was a cotton-on-cotton man's tunic from Niger, probably woven by the Bororo People.

We ended on a note of good cheer with Tom Stocker showing his painting of a rug with smiley face design.

The picnic made a grand finale for another great NERS season. Thanks to everybody for the mothing, munching, shmoozing, showing, sharing, fondling, and explaining that make this such an enjoyable event—make sure you don't miss next year's!



Tom Stocker's smiley face rug painting

Masterpieces on the Market: A Special Show at the *HALI* Fair By Ann Nicholas

There were over fifty exhibitors at the annual *HALI* Antique Carpet and Textile Art Fair held this June in London. The Fair was fully vetted, and the exhibitors displayed a wide variety of textiles ranging from classical oriental carpets and tribal and village rugs to sumptuous textiles, delicate embroideries, tapestries and exotic silks. It also included a thematic show, "Masterpieces on the Market," focusing on pre-1800 Persian carpets and textiles.

The eleven carpets displayed were remarkable examples of 16th and 17th century Persian carpet weaving from the classical period of Persian carpet design. Carpet weaving was changing from a craft to a masterful art. Leading artists in sophisticated royal design studios drew the elaborate curvilinear

designs that were executed by talented weavers in imperial workshops. Some carpets were made for imperial use or as gifts to foreign kings or ambassadors, while others were destined for export to the West. Few pieces survive today, and many of those are in museums, so it was a very special opportunity to see eleven examples together in one show.

Ben Evans, the deputy editor of *Hali*, led a guided tour of the show. In discussing the carpets he related how their color, movement, rhythm, and texture interacted to produce a weaving that reflected the splendor and refinement of that sophisticated culture. When produced, they were a symbol of wealth, luxury, and status. That significance remains

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Jeff Spurr—Our Member Who Doesn't Collect Rugs

By Ann Nicholas

Some members will perhaps recall our profile (3/28/97) on Jeff Spurr and his remarkable collection of ethnographic textiles. Space limitations precluded our mentioning another significant aspect of Jeff's extracurricular life that we thought our readers would find equally interesting. We are pleased to present it here.

Many NERS members know Jeff as the person who never brings a rug to our "Show and Tell." Jeff collects only textiles, mostly esoteric ones, but he is also very interested in rugs. With Mike Tschebull and Julia Bailey, he guided us through the *Prayer Rugs from the Islamic World* exhibit at the Sackler last December. He also wrote the introduction to our recent virtual rug exhibition of prayer rugs. An augmented version of that introduction, entitled *Ends and Means: Islamic Prayer Rugs in Context*, was published in the March/April 2003 issue (#127) of *Hali*.

When reading this introduction, one pillar of Jeff's personal philosophy becomes clear: it is not just a textile's formal and symbolic aspects that are important, but also its cultural context. He believes that the practical issues such as the manner of production and intended uses may imbue a piece with much of its meaning—or demonstrate the lack of it.

Textiles are only one aspect of Jeff's life. He works as a cataloguer for Islamic Art in the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University's Fine Arts Library. There he documents Islamic visual culture—anything from the Dome of the Rock to Iranian revolutionary poster art—and manages large archival collections of historical 19th and early 20th century photographs. For the last eleven years much of his spare time has been consumed by his Bosnia activism, and since early 1996 as coordinator of the Bosnia Library Project (BLP).

The Bosnian War came to an end about seven years ago. The four-year siege of Sarajevo and the burning of its National and University Library may be forgotten by many, but not by Jeff. In August of 1992 Serb nationalist forces began firing incendiary shells at the library; its grand and elegant stained-

glass skylight over the atrium made a perfect target. The great bulk of the 1.5 million books and many special collections contained within this Moorish-revival building on the Sarajevo riverfront were incinerated, leaving a burnt-out shell. It has been described as the largest book burning in history. Many other Bosnian library collections, as well as other buildings and institutions of cultural significance, were damaged or destroyed. Libraries and the books in them are both physical and cultural reflections of a society. Thus, by the end of the war, ethnic cleansing had been undertaken against both the Bosnian culture and individual Bosnians.

If you think about it, librarians help society remember its culture. So it was perhaps natural that Jeff and his colleague Andras Riedlmayer at the Harvard Library began to think of ways to help restore the National Library. In 1994 they sponsored a visit to Boston by Enes Kujundzic, the director of the bombed-out National and University Library. From a meeting at Boston's Public Library they issued a call to rebuild the Bosnian libraries—if necessary, one book at a time. By various means, the appeal was eventually heard. The Bosnia Library Project is both national and international in scope, involving foundations, libraries, universities, and publishers, but its driving force continues to be in Cambridge. Jeff has coordinated this effort from its formal beginnings, while his colleague, Andras, dedicated himself to the equally important task of documenting and publicizing the cultural genocide throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The National Library is now situated in one wing of another Austrian-era building, the old barracks. With funds from various international sources this building has been renovated and outfitted with stacks. Replacing the lost books and information is a continuing challenge. The university presses of Harvard, the University of Chicago, MIT, Princeton and Johns Hopkins donated two copies of virtually everything on their lists, while 16 scholarly presses have donated lesser amounts. The Harvard Univer-

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Jeff Spurr

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city libraries have been a continuing source of books, month after month. The Kennedy School of Government donated microfilm copies of the Washington Post, Boston Globe, and New York Times for the years that document the wars against Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. There have been many other donations of books, journals, and slides, as well as collection infrastructure. Jeff has worked to ensure that the donations to the library have been of uniformly high quality—none of yesterday’s potboilers, self-help books, old textbooks, out-of-date reference works, or hopelessly obscure materials.

Receiving donations of books is only part of the challenge; the logistics and cost of shipment are daunting. A twenty-foot container-load of books—approximately 10,000 volumes—costs as much as \$18,000 to ship. This includes the cost of storage at this end, transportation by ship, shipment from the Croatian port, and the storage and distribution in Sarajevo. While institutional funding covers part of the shipping costs, Jeff finds himself often appealing for donations from private sources to match grants, which are coming to be in ever-shorter supply.

Not satisfied with organizational efforts, Jeff often provides visiting Bosnians with a place to stay in his apartment and/or tours of Boston and Harvard. Kemel Bakarsic, a professor of librarianship at the University of Sarajevo, has been among Jeff’s many visitors. In 1996 the White House decided to honor three public-private partnerships, including the BLP, dedicated to helping revive Bosnia’s libraries. Hillary Rodham Clinton presided at the ceremony marking the formal inauguration of these efforts, and Bakarsic,

Josephine Powell: Grand Lady of Rugdom

By Jeff Spurr

Josephine Powell is one of those remarkable women from Western societies, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Gertrude Bell, and Freya Stark, who fell in love with the Middle East and indelibly left their mark, in her case largely through memorializing its places and people via her chosen profession, photography. Although born and educated in

Jeff, and several other BLP colleagues attended. Bosnian visitors to his apartment have been so frequent that it has been dubbed “Hostel Bosnia.”

Asking Jeff about the source of his commitment to activism, he credits his parents, especially his recently deceased mother. They gave him a strong sense of right and wrong and the virtues of tolerance and social activism. Further he learned that even when faced with evil, people should not remain silent—one can make the right choices and do something. What is it about this project that first captured Jeff’s imagination and continues to command so much of his time and efforts? I think part of it is Jeff’s belief that even with this great evil an accumulation of small interventions will make a difference. Over dinner Jeff talked about a book recently written by a granddaughter of Tito, Svetlana Broz, that related stories of people during the Balkan wars who helped save others of a different ethnic groups, sometimes at great risk to themselves. He sees the Library Project as a way to help preserve this multi-ethnic society and insure the education of future generations of Bosnians.

He is realistic, “We can never hope to regain what is lost, but we can aspire to useful collections giving today’s students some of what they need to understand the world and find their place in it.” He hopes, and believes, that the Bosnia Library Project will help Bosnia and its citizens recover from the dark days of the recent past.

If you would care to know more about the Bosnia Library Project or to make a contribution, please consult the following web sites:

www.applicom.com/twibih/library2002.html

www.applicom.com/twibih/appeal.html

New York and receiving a degree from Columbia University’s School of Social Work, she found herself in Rome shortly after the end of WWII, where she commenced her career as an architectural photographer. It was only at the beginning of the 1960s when she was invited to photograph Byzantine mo-

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President's Report

Well, another NERS season has now flowed down history's culvert, and I think most would agree: it was an excellent one. We survived one of our economy's harshest years...not intact, because we actually shrank by six members. But we're still in strong fiscal health...and we head into our 17th season as sound as we've ever been.

Looking back, it was a year of achievement for NERS. Top billing went to the opening of our on-line exhibition of prayer rugs from NERS collections—the first time a rug society has brightened the internet with such an event. Originally proposed by our indefatigable webmaster **Bob Alimi**, it opened in November through his efforts coupled with the energy and talents of fellow committee members **Jeff Spurr, Yon Bard** and **Jim Adelson**. The timing, incidentally, coincided with the hanging of an “actual” exhibition of prayer rugs at Harvard's Sackler Museum curated by NERS member **Amanda Phillips**.

If you're one of the few members who hasn't yet visited our online exhibit, do check it out. Go to our society's website (www.ne-rugsociety.org), click on “Gallery,” then choose “Prayer Rugs & Related Textiles.” Just below that, you'll also find the icon for the online presentation of our 1992 oriental rug exhibition, “Through the Collector's Eye.” And don't miss Jeff Spurr's accompanying essay, which garnered sufficient respect from the experts that it was republished in *Hali* (#127, Mar/Apr 03, p. 105). In it, Jeff raises some provocative questions regarding the functions and iconographies of prayer rugs.

As you hopefully already know, we have another virtual event in the making. Last spring saw the kickoff of a second NERS-sponsored online exhibition, this one featuring nomadic bags, bagfaces, and other tribal carrying implements. A gratifying outpouring of entries from NERS members resulted, and the opening is now planned for mid-autumn.

Last season's mix of speaker subjects was wide-ranging. The Indian anthropologist Monisha Ahmed visited us from Bombay to report on her work with the textile-producing nomads of Ladakh. Then Russian curator Natalia Nekrassova came from Toronto to give us new insights into the weavings of the Ersari

with a talk that was followed by an exceptional show-and-tell. December's meeting was a guided tour of the Sackler Museum's prayer rug exhibit accompanied by insightful remarks from NERS members **Julia Bailey, Jeff Spurr** and **Mike Tschebull**.

In February we broke new ground with another first: a hands-on show-and-tell session featuring the treasures of an NERS member's collection; not slides, but piles and piles of the real things. In this case it was a team effort featuring the separate (but equal) collections of the peripatetic California couple **Bethany Mendenhall** and **Charles Lave**, who from their extensive travels in Turkey have amassed two wonderful groupings of Anatolian weavings. Held in the informal setting of the Armenian Library and Museum of America in Watertown, it was a memorable evening. We'll be doing another somewhat similar session this coming season.

Then in March, NERS member **Tom Hannaher** gave us a superbly organized and informative survey of pre-Columbian textiles from South America, culminating in a hands-on (actually hands-off, please) display of his dazzling collection of ancient coca bags. In April we co-hosted (with Skinner) the German rug dealer Bertram Frauenknecht, who mused on his thirty years of serving international collectors, interspersed with travel to remote parts of the Middle East. And once again we held our annual Saturday picnic in Concord, this time under skies so fair that we abandoned our host's commodious barn and held our show-and-tell under brilliant sunlight.

There was one change of venue during the past season that deserves comment. For many years now we have enjoyed the excellent facilities of Bemis Hall in Lincoln. But that has changed. Bemis has closed its doors for major renovations, resulting in our discovering the availability of First Parish across the street. The latter is an equally accommodating facility that offers us even better benefits, not the least of which are a superintendent who handles set-up and break-down, and a rental cost that's 40% less than Bemis. There's one reservation, though: owing to the ever-burgeoning public liquor liability issue,

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President's Report

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serving wine and beer at our meetings there would require hiring a licensed bartender at a minimum charge of \$200 per meeting. Since our explorations have shown that this is now policy at most locally available venues (including Bemis when it reopens), we've made the decision to suspend alcoholic beverages at our meetings except at locations that permit them without extra cost. At least, the bar at our annual spring outing continues to flow generously!

Speaking of cost savings, please know that every member who receives his or her NERS newsletter via email saves us about \$10 a year. At present, less than half our newsletter recipients require the U.S. Postal Service, and the number continues to drop. So if you're not an email user, we hope you'll make the switch and help us keep our dues low.

Once again this year, the Society was able to make modest donations to several worthy organizations that are especially supportive of our causes. These included The Textile Museum in Washington DC, the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto, the Armenian Library and Museum of America, and the American Conference on Oriental Rugs.

Our membership continues to be both stable, fresh, and diversified. Although 27 members did not renew last season (more than usual but not uncommon for a down economy), we also signed on 21 new members. Interestingly, the majority of them found us through our website on the internet. And we continue to live up to our name. Here is a current breakout of our membership:

Eastern Massachusetts	137
Western Massachusetts	4
Connecticut	5
Rhode Island	2
New Hampshire	6
Vermont	3
Maine	6
New York	1
Indiana	1
Illinois	1
California	2

As usual, there are many people without whom

the NERS couldn't function as smoothly as it does. Our steering committee shoulders the brunt of the task: **John Clift**, **Tom Hannaher** and **Gillian Richardson** brightening our meetings with sumptuous food and drink; **Yon Bard**, **Jim Adelson** and **Jeff Spurr** making our newsletter one of the rug world's best; **Julia Bailey** helping keep our speaker program rich and entertaining; **Janet Smith** handling all those unnoticed details without which we would stumble; and **Bob Alimi** spearheading the ongoing enrichment of our superb NERS website.

This year we lamented losing **Sheryl Read** from our steering committee. For many years one of our most enthusiastic contributors known especially for her newsletter profiles of NERS members, Sheryl has been beset by business pressures that have left her little time for herself. She promises to be back when things lighten up, and we know she means it.

There are others to thank as well. Meeting set-up has been made easier through the generosity of **Buzz** and **Louise Dohanian** who handle our projection screens, and **Lloyd Kannenberg** who sets up our sound system. We're also indebted to **Jo Kris** for hosting our April meeting at Skinner's Boston Gallery, **Gary Lind-Sinanian** for hosting our once-a-year meeting at the Armenian Library and Museum, and **Ann Nicholas** for filling the gap left by Sheryl with her own great series of member profiles for the newsletter. It's the efforts of people like them that keeps the NERS running so smoothly. But we can always use more help, so if you'd like to pitch in, please let me know.

Finally, we thank everyone in the NERS for their generous support over the past year. Many of our guest speakers have afterwards relayed heartwarming praise for the enthusiasm of our members, the quality of their questions and comments, and the high level of interest and knowledge that infuses our meetings. So...thanks to everyone for being there, for pitching in when help is needed, and for providing the level of ongoing support that's so vital to keeping our organization a healthy and rewarding one. We couldn't do it without you.

Mark Hopkins



Josephine Powell

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saics in Istanbul by David Talbot Rice, a prolific Byzantine scholar with an interest in Islamic art, that she discovered the place where she would establish a life for herself, moving to Istanbul permanently in 1974, although the site of her business would remain Rome.

Over four decades, Josephine documented in exceptional black-and-white images the architecture of the Middle East—particularly Islamic—as far afield as Uzbekistan and including Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and North Africa, from Libya to Morocco. She also documented important museum collections, significantly including those of the Kabul Museum, now looted and destroyed due to a dire combination of civil war and religious fanaticism. The great bulk of these photographs is now housed in Harvard's Fine Arts Library.

At the same time she found her real labor of love. Sparked first by an interest in the tribal peoples of Afghanistan and their weaving culture, she turned at the beginning of the 1970s to documenting the lives and material culture of the nomadic, semi-nomadic, and recently settled peoples of Anatolia, with an emphasis on the weaving arts that have made them famous to collectors. Anyone who was present at her talk to the NERS in 1996 will remember her wonderful color slides and the extremely skillful way in which she adduced evidence from three sources: her research on the woven products of these people, her

documentation of kilims donated to village and town mosques, and Ottoman census records which showed where various tribal groupings had been based over time, in order to map the movements of these social groups in time and space. She ultimately accumulated approximately 35,000 color slides and photographs, detailed field notes, and a remarkable collection of artifacts—particularly weavings but including all the tools used in textile production among other categories of daily life objects.

In recent years she has decided to endow a new institution, the **Anatolian Cultural Heritage Center** in Istanbul, with her unparalleled collections. This is a means to provide a venue for all interested parties to view exhibits and undertake research and thus insure that posterity will enjoy this unequalled record of a world that has even now nearly passed altogether into history. It will be administered by the Tarih Vahfi, the Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey, a non-profit organization which relies for its existence on private donations—as will the new center.

Please consult the following web pages for more information, including how you can help to support this remarkable collection:

www.ne-rugsociety.org/adopt-kilim/anatolian-cultural-heritage-center.htm

www.ne-rugsociety.org/adopt-kilim/adopt-background.htm

www.marlamallett.com/powell.htm.

NERS News

New members. We welcome the following additions to our roster: Thomas & Virginia Gasho, Bill and Joy Kierstead, Joan Lancourt, Gay Lockwood, Thomas Mond & Sally Chan, and Nancy Warren.

Special Thanks to members whose extra generous support helped us round out such a successful year. **Patrons:** Jim Adelson & Debbie Sheetz, John Collins, Jeremy and Hanne Grantham, George Grillo, Michael and Nancy Grogan, Tom and Ann Hannaher, Mark Hopkins, Jo Kris, Sheryl Read, Beau Ryan, and Peter Walker. **Supporting Members:** Tom and Vir-

ginia Gasho, Lloyd and Susan Kannenberg, Daniel Lahoda, Phil and Sharon Lichtman, Pamela and Preston Mason, Peter Pap, Gillian Richardson, Rosalie and Mitch Rudnick, and Tom Stocker and Jim Alexander.

NERS on-line bag exhibition. The response to our solicitation of pieces for our forthcoming exhibition of bags has been very gratifying: over 150 items have been submitted, making the task of selecting the forty-plus pieces that will be included both pleasant and daunting. The owners of the selected

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NERS News

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pieces will be notified shortly, after which arrangements will have to be made to obtain quality photographs of these pieces. We hope to have the exhibition on-line in October, or November at the latest. Please contact Bob Alimi at 508-616-0363 or ralimi@ne-rugsociety.org for more information..

Kilim adopted. NERS has 'adopted' another kilim by donating \$250 to benefit the Anatolian Cultural Heritage Center that is being established in Istanbul by Josephine Powell (see page 8 of our 5/3/02 issue for details). The kilim can be seen in full color at www.ne-rugsociety.org/adopt-kilim/77.jpg.

The letter that we received from Josephine to acknowledge our previous adoption is printed below, and a profile of her by Jeff Spurr appears on page 9. We also publish a thank-you note from Charles Lave and Bethany Mendenhall who thought up and now manage the Adopt-a-Kilim project (see page 14).

Our newly
adopted
Anatolian
kilim



Letter from Josephine Powell

The Anatolian Cultural Heritage Center In Istanbul, March 20, 2003

I wanted to take this opportunity to express my thanks for your generous contribution to our project, *The Center for Anatolian Ethnography and Textile Studies* in Istanbul. Although I've delayed writing to you for an unconscionably long time, the thought of your kindness has been a great encouragement. Many things have happened in the past year, all of which have helped the project. We were fortunate to receive the additions of the Pertev Naili Boratav and Ilhan Basgöz archives through the History Foundation. The combined collection now spans photographic, ethnographic, and folkloric materials as well as my collection of Anatolian textiles. We have, in addition to many types of flat-weavings, everyday objects of Turkish nomadic and village life such as weaving and agricultural tools, over 30,000 photographs of nomadic and village life, a library of art, history and culture, and Pertev Boratav and Ilhan Basgöz's fieldnotes and recordings. The center has been renamed *The Anatolian Cultural Heritage Cen-*

ter to reflect the expanded holdings.

A recent major accomplishment was the matching-funds campaign which helped us put the ground under our fundraising campaign and encouraged us to employ a second part-time student. Our friends Charles Lave and Bethany Mendenhall had the brilliant idea to give individualized attention to textiles in need with the Adopt-a-Kilim Program. Through this on-going effort, over thirty-five kilims and storage sacs have found sponsors and potential adopters are responding through the website. Please take a look for yourself: www.ne-rugsociety.org/adopt-kilim/adopt-background.htm. We are now washing, repairing and mounting these kilims and sacs; some of them are finished. We have made progress on our work with the archives here in our two floors looking over the Bosphorus in Cihangir. Over 20,000 slides are now digitized and are going into our database, accompanying the notes I made on my twenty trips to Anatolia. We have received several donations of objects and textiles from generous support-

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Letter from Josephine Powell

Continued from page 13

ers. Amanda Phillips, who studied at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with Dr. Walter Denny, received a Fulbright to work on textiles in Turkey; she has been using the archives to identify kilims related to the Ottoman workshop traditions of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Everyone who has worked on this project is encouraged by your donation. It helps us to know that our work and especially the future of the Anatolian Cultural Heritage Center has begun to find

international support. We are working hard to make this center a reality and to put the study of Anatolian rural cultures on the map. Our work is only beginning, and we will appreciate your continued support. We welcome any flashes of genius you may have to help us on our way.

With all my very best wishes, Josephine

P.S. The kilim you adopted no. 30 has been washed and mounted on canvas. It looks grand.

Josephine

Letter from Charles Lave and Bethany Mendenhall

Dear Mark,

Once again, many thanks to you & NERS for leading the way & showing the rug societies how to sponsor the preservation of Josephine's kilims & chuvals. And we've been even more impressed with how you all have put the information about your piece & the project on your web site—special thanks to Bob Alimi for his ingenuity with all these links! This is a big project but I think a very worthy one, and we're very grateful for your support.

Our best for all—Charles & Bethany

Masterpieces of the Market

Continued from page 7

today, as the most recent issue of *Hali* reports that one of the carpets, a large fragment of the extraordinary late 16th century Bacri Imperial Hunting Carpet, sold for a seven-figure sum.

Directions for September Meeting:

Take I 95 North to Route 113, Exit 57, at Newburyport. Turn right (East) on 113 (High Street) and proceed for about 2.3 miles. At the first blinking traffic light you will see a brick courthouse on your right and the Blue Water Cafe on your left. Turn left (Green Street) and go to the bottom of the hill. Turn right (Merrimac Street) and bear left through the Square. The Collins Gallery is on your left at the far traffic light. **Parking** is available in the municipal lot behind the store.(left turn)



Advertisement on back page of the 1885
Technique (the MIT yearbook)
Submitted by Lloyd Kannenberg—
no, that is not (quite) the year of his graduation!



Upcoming Rug Events

NERS 2003/4 Meetings:

November 14: Peter Stone on development of tribal and workshop design motifs; joint meeting with Skinner

February 2004: Seref Ozen on Central Asian rugs and textiles

March: Harald Böhmer on the nomads of Anatolia and their weavings

April: Jim Adelson and Yon Bard on Turkmen weavings

May: Picnic and show & tell.

Auctions:

Bonhams, London, 10/14

Bonhams & Butterfields, San Francisco, 9/16

Christie's, London, 9/17, 10/16

Christie's, New York, 12/17

Nagel, Stuttgart, 11/4

Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 9/27, 11/15

Skinner, Boston, 11/15

Sotheby's, London, 10/15

Sotheby's, New York, 9/19, 12/2.

On TV:

Martha Stewart Living, Channel 4 (CBS), probably (check listings!) 9/25 at 9AM: discussion of oriental rugs with Shiv Sikri, NYC rug dealer. The Beshir main carpet fragment that will perhaps be discussed comes from an NERS member's collection (guess whose!).

Conferences:

ACOR 7, Seattle, WA, 3/25-28/04. Details will be mailed to our members in September.

Exhibitions and Fairs:

New paintings by Tom Stocker, at South End Open Studios, 37 Clarendon Street, Boston, 9/13-14

Frauenknecht's Fragments, at Mark Shilen Gallery, 457 Broome Street, NY. An exhibition of carpet, kilim, and textile fragments ca. 500 BC to 1800 AD from the collection of Galerie Frauenknecht, Munich, Germany. 9/17 to 10/5.

Opening reception 9/17, 6-8PM. Information at 212-925-3394 or shilen@att.net.

Tucson II Antique Rug & Textile Bazaar, Tucson, AZ, 10/31-11/2. For information call 760-944-7571 or visit www.tucsonbazaar.com.

Tours:

Kathy Green of the Toronto Rug Society is organizing the following Asian tours that might be of interest to textile lovers. The destinations are:

Central Asia, the Mysterious East: Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, 4/11-5/4/04, led by Natalia Nekrassova, our November 2002 meeting speaker

Exotic India: Northern Highlights with Pushkar Fair, 11/14-12/9/04.

For details, call 905-471-7381 or email to 102377.1463@compuserve.com.

The New England Rug Society is an informal, non-profit organization of people interested in enriching their knowledge and appreciation of antique oriental rugs and textiles. Its meetings are held six to eight times a year. Annual membership dues are: Single \$45, Couple \$65, Supporting \$90, Patron \$120. Membership information or renewal forms can be obtained on our website www.newenglandrugsociety.org, or by writing to **New England Rug Society, P.O. Box 582, Lincoln, MA 01773**, calling Mark Hopkins at 781-259-9444, or emailing him at mopkins@netway.com.

NERS 2003/4 Steering Committee:

Mark Hopkins (President)

Jim Adelson

Robert Alimi

Julia Bailey

Yonathan Bard

John Clift

Tom Hannaher

Gillian Richardson

Janet Smith

Jeff Spurr



October Meeting

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Ms. Benjamin will trace the history and long tradition of wax-resist textile making in Japan and its current evolution and practice today. Interviews with many outstanding contemporary artists reveal their vibrant approaches to the craft—from application on traditional ceremonial dress to the most imaginative sculptural creations—and include striking photographs of their studios and work.

Betsy Sterling Benjamin is a wax-resist textile artist who lived in Japan for 18 years. She has researched wax-resist textiles and techniques around the world and has over twenty-five years of experience with wax-resist dyeing. She has lectured, published, and exhibited widely on this subject. She lives in New Hampshire where she maintains a working studio. She wrote the first comprehensive book to appear in English on Japanese wax-resist, *The World of Rozome*, which was published to much acclaim in 1996 by Kodansha International.

October Meeting Details (cont.)

Directions:

From Rte. 95 (128) take the Trapelo Road West exit (#28B) in Waltham. Proceed west about 2.5 miles to a stop sign at the five-way intersection in Lincoln (there is a white planter in the middle of the intersection.) Go right on Bedford Road for 0.1 miles to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on your right. **The parish house is on your left.**

From Rte. 2 take Bedford Road, Lincoln Center exit (eastbound, turn right at light; westbound, go through light, turn right, and circle 270 degrees to cross Rte. 2 at the light.) Proceed 0.9 miles and you will see Bemis Hall, a large brick building on your left. **The parish house is on your right.**

Parking:

In back of the parish house plus along the street. It's OK to park in front of Bemis Hall **provided the building is dark and not in use.**



New England Rug Society
Post Office Box 582, Lincoln, MA 01773



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