



# View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. 31 No. 4 December 2024

[www.ne-rugsociety.org](http://www.ne-rugsociety.org)

## December 7 Webinar: Kenneth Hayes on an Anatolian Prayer Rug for a Seljuk Sultan



**Kenneth Hayes**

On December 7, Kenneth Hayes will present “The Prayer Rug of a Seljuk Sultan.” As he will point out, the origins of the Turkish prayer rug tradition have until now remained a mystery. Historians generally accept that a dozen or so rugs and rug fragments from Konya and Beyşehir date to the Seljuk era, but the group does not include any rug identifiable as having been made for individual prayer. Kenneth’s presentation will use art-historical methods to show that a finely woven rug held in the Konya Ethnographic Museum (KEM 1089/90), currently misattributed to the seventeenth century, is in fact several centuries older. He will argue that not only is it a unique and boldly conceived Rum Seljuk-era prayer rug, but that it was almost certainly the private prayer rug of a Seljuk Sultan.

Kenneth, who lives in Sudbury, Canada, is an independent architectural historian. His 2010 dissertation, written at

### Webinar Details

Hosted by the New England Rug Society

**Date and Time:** Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024, 1 PM ET

**Venue:** Your desktop, laptop, or tablet

**Registration:** If you have registered for a previous NERS webinar, you will receive an email invitation to this one. Or register with this link:

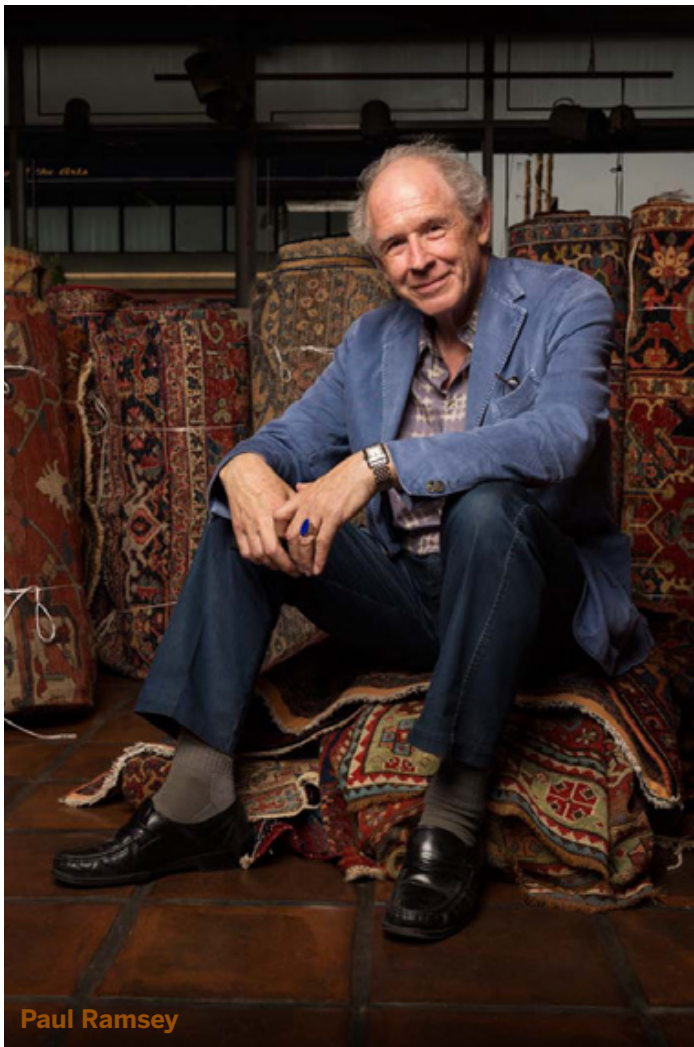
<https://tinyurl.com/SeljukNERSfringefb>



**Bottom detail of Konya Ethnographic Museum KEM 1089/90**

Middle East Technical University, Ankara, concerned the emergence of a mosque type in Seljuk Anatolia during the second half of the thirteenth century. Throughout his architectural studies and travels in Turkey, he pursued his interest in rugs and textiles, and first spoke about them in 2007 at ICOC XI, in Istanbul. At ICOC XV last June—again in Istanbul—he gave a shorter version of this NERS webinar presentation. He also writes contemporary art criticism, with particular focus on photography.

January 25 TMA/SC Webinar (Co-sponsored by NERS):  
Paul Ramsey, “Nomadic Peoples of West Iran and Their Amazing Transport Bags”



Paul Ramsey

This presentation will discuss the major groups of traditionally nomadic peoples along the Zagros in western and southern Iran—Shahsavari, Kurds, Luri, Bakhtiari, Qashqa'i, and Khamseh Federation—with emphasis on their various transport bags, some of them shown in use by their makers and others photographed in private collections.

Presenter Paul Ramsey first traveled to Iran in 1975. Soon thereafter, he and his partner, Carolyn Shaver, opened the Shaver-Ramsey Gallery in Denver. Over the years Paul has taught courses on rugs and given talks at ICOC, ACOR, and many rug-society meetings. In 2022–23 he was curator of the exhibition *Rugged Beauty*, which included rugs from the GWU/Textile Museum, the Saint Louis Art Museum, and local collections. In 2024 he received the Joseph V. McMullan Award for Stewardship and Scholarship in Islamic Rugs and Textiles.

## Webinar Details

Hosted by TMA/SC  
(Textile Museum Associates of Southern California)  
and co-sponsored by NERS

**Date and Time:** Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025, 1 PM ET

**Venue:** your desktop, laptop, or tablet

**Registration:**

<https://tinyurl.com/TMANomadsofWestIraners>

## Upcoming Rug and Textile Events

### Exhibitions

Until Dec. 21, 2024, Washington, GWU/Textile Museum  
Irresistible: The Global Patterns of Ikat

Until Apr. 15, 2025, Washington, GTU/Textile Museum  
Art Uncovered: Visionary Textile Scholars and Their Archives

### Exhibitions, cont.

Until May 5, 2025, London, Victoria and Albert Museum  
The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence

Feb. 25–June 15, 2025, Washington, GTU/Textile Museum  
Intrinsic Beauty: Celebrating the Art of Textiles

### Auction

Jan. 26, 2025, Boston, Grogan & Company  
Fine Rugs and Carpets

## Photo Credits

p. 1: Kenneth Hayes p. 2: Paula Krugmeier p. 3: Shaver-Ramsey p. 4: Sandra E. Marksen pp. 5–7: Walter Denny  
pp. 8–9: Julia or Doug Bailey pp. 10–11: Deniz Coşkun



## February 1 Webinar Preview: Paula Krugmeier on Ottoman-Era Silks of the Levant



**Silk tapestry-weave purse, woven in the Ottoman-era Mutasarrifate of Mt. Lebanon (today's Lebanon), silk, early 20th century, presenter's collection**

The Levant, the culturally diverse territory of the eastern Mediterranean, remained under Ottoman rule from the sixteenth century through the end of World War I. During this period, a cluster of silk-weaving centers, encompassing both cottage industries and established workshops, emerged there. Paula Krugmeier's presentation will outline the geopolitical influences on the textiles produced in these centers and will show a representative range of garments, accessories, and panels.

Born and raised in the Los Angeles area, Paula received degrees in architecture from the University of California, Berkeley, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology's School of Architecture and Planning. Her architectural practice spanned forty years in Cambridge and San Francisco. In 1990, when living near the DeYoung Museum, she wandered quite by chance into an exhibition of Anatolian kilims presented concurrently with ICOC VI. That epic show sparked Paula's interest in collecting rugs and textiles, and inspired travels including six trips through Central Asia as well as journeys in Tibet, Ladakh, Turkey, Greece, Syria, the Balkans, and Russia. About fifteen years ago Paula acquired her first Syrian textile, and has since assembled a collection encompassing a range of pieces from the region.



**Paula Krugmeier**

### Webinar Details

**Hosted by the New England Rug Society  
and co-sponsored by TMA/SC**

**Date and Time:** Saturday, Feb. 1, 2025  
1 PM ET

**Venue:** Your desktop, laptop, or tablet

**Registration:** If you have registered for a previous NERS webinar, you will receive an email invitation to this one. Or register with this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/5n7azwhp>

## In Memoriam: John Clift



### John Clift, 1949–2024

*With sadness we report the death of loyal and longtime member John Clift, who joined NERS in its earliest days and served for many years on its Steering Committee. Edited excerpts from the obituary written by his friend Sandra E. Marksens follow.*

John Clift, 75, longtime resident of Dorchester, died October 29 at Sherrill House in Jamaica Plain. Born on April 17, 1949, in Hyannis, he spent many hours watching and later helping his father operate steam shovels and bulldozers to build and expand the family home in Yarmouth. He was a graduate of Dennis-Yarmouth High School and Worcester Polytechnic Institute, where he earned a B.S. in mechanical engineering. After moving to Boston, he purchased a classic 1900-era triple-decker in Savin Hill and embarked on a career in facilities management, working for Johnson Controls, Boston University, Trinity Church of Boston, and M. H. Massey & Co., from which he retired in 2014. As director of facilities at Trinity Church from 1996

to 2003, he played a crucial role in the restoration and expansion of H. H. Richardson's national historic landmark.

John was an avid student and collector of art, including painting, calligraphy, sculpture, and weaving, particularly antique kilims. *[We fellow NERS members knew him as a discerning collector of Anatolian kilims.]* His travels included trips to many European countries, Turkey, and, in the fall of 2019, China. In preparation for this “dream trip” he studied Chinese with a tutor; after returning home he continued Chinese lessons until his lung-cancer diagnosis last spring.

John is survived by his sister, Virginia M. Clift, of Plymouth, and by many friends with whom he maintained deep and decades-long connections. His funeral service was held on November 21 at Trinity Church. Donations in his memory can be made to Sherrill House ([sherrillhouse.org](http://sherrillhouse.org)) or Longwood Hospice ([longwoodhospice.com](http://longwoodhospice.com)), both of which provided John with excellent, compassionate care.



# September 7 Webinar Report: Walter Denny on New Frontiers in Carpet Studies

By Julia Bailey



**Walter Denny**

On September 7, veteran presenter Walter Denny opened the fifth season of New England Rug Society webinars with “New Frontiers in Carpet Study,” an expanded version of his June keynote lecture at the fifteenth International Conference on Carpets, in Istanbul.

Before considering the future of rug studies, Walter paid tribute to scholars past and present, noting that their ranks, then and now, include many dealers and private collectors **(1)**. In addition, influential periodicals and events, in particular *HALI* and ICOC, and such scholarly books as Jon Thompson’s *Milestones in Islamic Art* and Michael Franes et al.’s *The Orient Stars Collection* are closely linked to the trade.

Walter then discussed important, relatively recent carpet discoveries made in Central Anatolia, Italy, Tibet **(2)**, and Japan, and acknowledged that the marketplace has been much altered by the internet, although online catalogues and other resources, however visually informative, don’t allow the tactile assessment of the rugs.

The future of carpet studies, he lamented, is jeopardized by the fact that rug collecting is now largely the pursuit of an aging cohort **(3)**; whether young people will grow interested in rugs remains unclear. Similarly, most academic carpet specialists are older, and rug-friendly Ph.D. programs require that young scholars focus on classical rather than more recent carpets. Finally, researchers with the language skills to interpret potentially valuable documentary sources in languages not commonly taught in academia (e.g., Azeri and Armenian) may find their scholarly objectivity sacrificed to nationalist cultural agendas.



**1. Past collectors (top left to bottom right): Wilhelm von Bode, May Beattie, Charles Grant Ellis, Arthur Upham Pope, Louisa Bellinger, Ernst Kühnel, F. R. Martin, Josephine Powell, Jon Thompson, Hans König, Robert Pinner, Kurt Erdmann**



**2 (left). The “Faces Carpet,” now Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, dated to 1050–1200 in *The Orient Stars Collection*, a catalogue of rugs collected by Heinrich Kirchheim**

**3. An older demographic: the opening reception of the Dealers' Fair at ICOC XV, Istanbul, in June 2024**



With greater optimism, Walter next turned to the new frontiers of conservation, predicting that discoveries made in labs such as those of the Metropolitan Museum's Textile Conservation (4) and the Textile Museum's Avenir Center (5) would most alter our current knowledge of carpets, both classical and collectible.

Conservation practices and ethics, he observed, are continually evolving. For example, following the 1973 bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of a rare Ottoman prayer rug (6a), all its restorations (even though well executed and colorfast) were removed as "unoriginal," leaving a ragged fragment (6b). Today, Walter said, such repairs, carefully documented, would more likely be preserved as part of a carpet's history.

For greater structural accuracy, knot counts of larger carpets are now taken from several areas and over square decimeters rather than square inches. Analytical equipment is far more complex, requiring a conservator's training in chemistry and physics.

While he professed skepticism about the reliability of carbon-14 dating, Walter viewed such non-destructive testing methods as X-ray fluorescence, high-performance liquid chromatography, and fiber-diameter analysis as promising, although accumulating and interpreting data from these techniques is expensive and requires collaborative effort. New digital technology that combines multiple, laser-guided photos into single, super-high-resolution images makes photographing large carpets far easier, but it too is pricey.

**4. Textile Conservation, Metropolitan Museum: stabilization of the Emperor Carpet (43.121.1) prior to its 2011 exhibition in the renovated Islamic galleries.**



**5. Laboratory in the Avenir Foundation Conservation and Collections Resource Center of The GWU Museum and The Textile Museum**

**6a, 6b. Ottoman prayer rug, probably Istanbul, late 16th century: visually intact prior to its 1973 bequest to the Metropolitan Museum by Joseph V. McMullan, and in fragmentary condition following the removal of its restorations, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1974.1471**





Museum displays of carpets are likewise evolving. For example, Walter noted that judicious placement of modular platforms, as in the spacious galleries of the Saint Louis Museum of Art (7), allows rugs to be viewed without intervening glass. Positioning rugs on steeply slanted boards, as at the Turkish and Islamic Art Museum (8), avoids the stress on them caused by their being hung vertically. Low-level lighting can be used with dramatic effectiveness, as it was in a 2014 exhibition in Genoa: against black walls, carpets there were individually illuminated by projected rectangles of light (9, 10). But some modern displays fall woefully short; Walter had no patience for the clichéd “flying carpet” installation in Vienna’s Museum of Applied Arts (11), nor for the minimal showing of rugs in the Louvre’s gloomy Islamic galleries (12).

In conclusion, he posed what he considered the main questions about the future of carpets: What sorts would be

available on the market? Would there be new geographic sources for them (akin to, recently, the former Soviet Union and Tibet)? How would museums store, conserve, and display carpets for public education and appreciation? (Would they even be displayed at all?) And who among the young would be the new carpet collectors? Closing his presentation with acknowledgments and a wide-ranging Q and A fielded by Jean Hoffman, Walter left it to his large audience to ponder these uncertainties.

*Author/editor’s note: This webinar report, like others to come, is but a selective summary of the speaker’s full presentation. Recordings of all NERS webinars since our series debuted in 2020 are available to our entire membership. If you are not a member of NERS, we urge you to join our society and enjoy, at your own convenience, the full experience of these talks.*



**7. Saint Louis Art Museum**

**8. Turkish and Islamic Art Museum, Istanbul**

**9, 10. Palazzo Lomellino, Genoa, 2014 exhibition of Ottoman Art**

**11. Museum of Applied Arts (MAK), Vienna**

**12. Louvre Museum, Paris**



# October 13 Meeting Report: Persian Pile Weaving Show-and-Tell

By Julia Bailey

On a balmy October 13 afternoon, twenty-some NERS members and their guests, many bearing multiple Persian-made rugs and bags, convened at Durant-Kenrick House, Newton. After snacking on sandwiches, cookies, and beverages provided by NERS, they settled in for a lively, audience-participatory meeting. By way of introduction, members Julia Bailey, Joel Greifinger, and Jean Hoffman respectively presented examples

of weavings from workshop, village, and tribal settings: Julia a fragment of a “washed and painted” Sarouk carpet made expressly for American consumption (mercifully not illustrated); Joel a Sauj Bulag Kurdish rug (see next page); and Jean four Afshar rugs of increasing age (see below). The following show-and-tell, with good-natured and informative owner comments, proceeded in more-or-less reverse order.



From left, bags or bagfaces: Qashqa'i, Khamseh, Bakhtiari, Afshar (*not* Baluch!), Luri, Jaf Kurd, Luri or Afshar

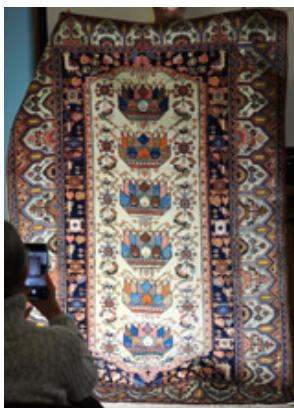


From left, Afshar rugs of increasing age, the rightmost example including facing male and female goats

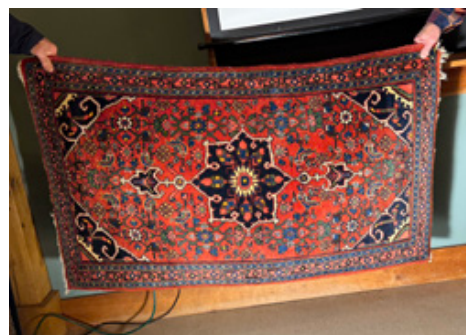


From left: Qashqa'i rug with botehs, Qashqa'i carpet, Khamseh “bird” carpet (above), Varamin carpet (below)





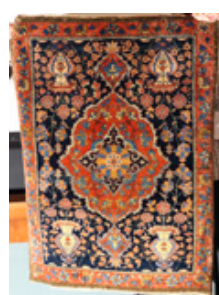
From left: Savan-area tribal and village "fruit basket" rugs, Sauj Bulag rug, Heriz-district rug



Three Bijars, older to younger, the left and center examples knotted on wool warps, the right one on cotton warps



Contrasting  
Farahan Sarouk  
rugs and mat



Kashan mat,  
Mohtasham  
Kashan carpet



The author/editor, inveigled into posing with her Kirman rug; Richard Belkin, hunting for the chickens he swears are hidden in the design of his Farahan Sarouk carpet



Oldest by far: fragment of a vase-technique carpet, Kirman, 17th c.



# November 7 Webinar Report: Deniz Coşkun on So-Called Varsak Kilims

By Julia Bailey



**Deniz Coşkun**

On November 2, Anatolian rug and kilim specialist and tour leader Deniz Coşkun presented “So-Called Varsak Kilims: Unraveling Their Anatolian Turkman History.” Showing examples of this species of kilim, he pointed out their

characteristic design features, including a limited color range and the “fingerprint” presence of small, stepped-diamond motifs (1–3).

Deniz then turned to the history of the Western Turks (Turkmen), who by the thirteenth century had established their presence throughout Anatolia. Because the Turkmen (known in western Anatolia as Yörük) sided with Tamerlane in his campaign against the Ottomans, ending in their 1402 defeat, the soon-resurgent Ottomans retaliated by subdividing larger Turkmen political groups and forcibly resettling their members. One such tribal group was The Ulu Yörük; throughout the fifteenth century, Ulu Yörük subgroups moved, in ever-decreasing numbers, from Tokat (in the Sivas area) to Ankara and then Balıkesir and Kutahya. By the 1550s, a very small subgroup lived as semi-sedentary villagers north of Antalya (4), in southwestern Anatolia. This area is where the nineteenth-century kilims in question were found.



**2. “Varsak” kilim (detail), first half 19th century**



**3. “Varsak” kilim, second half 19th century**



**1. “Varsak” kilim (detail), first half 19th century**



**4. Fifteenth-century Ulu Yörük subtribal migration**



Ottoman tax records, Deniz noted, recorded the tribal names of the Antalya-area subgroups; the villages of the area still bear these names, although the village inhabitants themselves are no longer aware of their tribal affiliations. Deniz and his fellow researchers (5) wanted to know why the so-called Varsak kilims of Antalya were so different from kilims woven by Varsak tribal groups remaining elsewhere in Anatolia (6). So they headed to the Antalya-region villages named in the Ottoman records, where they showed images of the kilims in question to the weaving elders (7). These women were unanimous in attributing the kilims not to Varsak, but to the village of Küçükköy. The name “Alafaridin” was mentioned.

Because an alternative trade name for the misattributed kilims was “Circassian,” Deniz and his team also visited nearby Yeleme village, which in 1867 had received an influx of refugees from the Russian invasion of the Caucasus. According to current Yeleme villagers, however, they had no kilim-weaving tradition; when their Circassian forebears first arrived, they had found kilims already in place in the local mosque.



**5. On the road in Küçükköy: Deniz with fellow team members Michael Bischof (front right) and Öznur Tanal (rear right), and villagers Zeynep and Hamdi Tuğ**



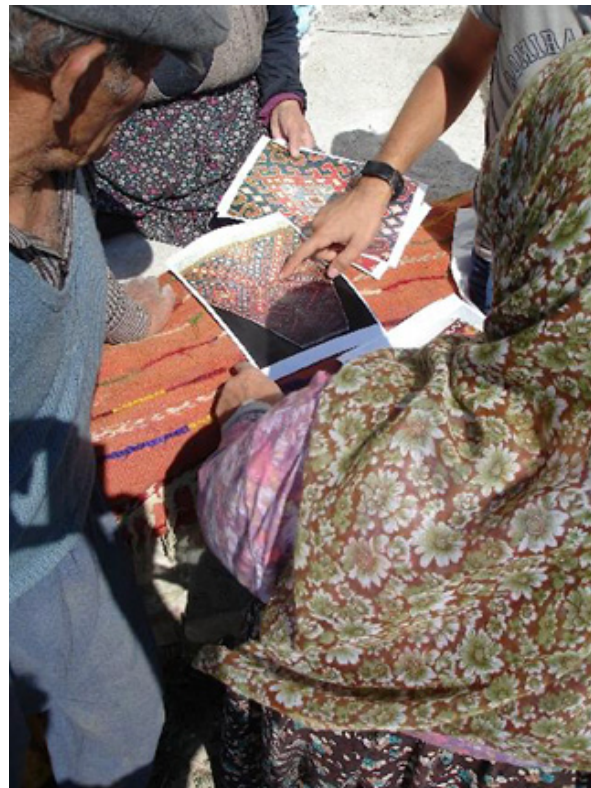
**6. Kilims made by Varsak tribal groups elsewhere in Anatolia**

When interviewed, most villagers of Yayla Varsak itself told Deniz’s team that they likewise had no history of kilim weaving, although one elderly grocer described a kilim made by his grandmother. It did not resemble the ones in the target group.

The researchers therefore concluded that so-called Varsak kilims had no connection with Yayla Varsak. But Küçükköy had been home to the Ali Fahrettin, a subtribe of the Ulu Yörük. The old name of Küçükköy, in fact, had been Alifahrettin Sagir, meaning “little Alifahrettin.” So, rather than “Varsak,” the name “Alafaridin,” mentioned by the veteran weavers of Küçükköy, was the correct designation for these kilims.

Following his presentation, Deniz adeptly answered audience questions posed by Jean Hoffman. Responding to a query about design, for instance, he pointed out the striking correspondence of the now-renamed Alafaridin kilims to Kyrgyz reed screens. Asked about the value of field work, he stressed its urgency, noting that his sources—women who remember their grandmothers making Alafaridin kilims—are themselves now old, and that, if not recorded, the knowledge these witnesses hold in memory will be lost in the coming decades.

We thank Deniz for so capably sharing his fieldwork and its conclusions with an appreciative international audience.



**7. Deniz asks villagers of Kirkpınar about the weaving place of the pictured kilim**

**Editorial content of this issue:**

Julia Bailey

**Distributor:**

Jim Sampson

**Current NERS Steering Committee:**

Joel Greifinger (President), Julia Bailey,  
Richard Belkin, Lloyd Kannenberg,  
Jim Sampson, Jeff Spurr

**The New England Rug Society** is an informal, nonprofit organization of people interested in enriching their knowledge and appreciation of antique oriental rugs and textiles. Our webinars and meetings are held seven or more times a year. Membership levels and annual dues are: Patron \$170, Supporting \$110, Couple \$80, Single \$60, Student \$30.

For more information and forms for joining NERS or renewing your membership, go to <https://ne-rugsociety.org/membership/>

**The New England Rug Society**

22 Robin Hill Rd.  
Holliston, MA 01746-1650

**In this issue:**

December 7 Webinar Preview: Kenneth Hayes on a Rug for a Seljuk Sultan	1
January 25 Co-sponsored Webinar: Paul Ramsey on West Persian Transport Bags	2
Upcoming Events and Photo Credits	2
February 1 Webinar Preview: Paula Krugmeier on Ottoman-Era Silks of the Levant	3
In Memoriam: Longtime NERS Member John Clift	4
September Webinar Report: Walter Denny on What's Next in Carpet Studies	5–7
October Meeting Report: Persian Pile Weaving Show-and-Tell	8–9
November Webinar Report: Deniz Coşkun on So-Called Varsak Kilims	10–11