



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

College of Arts and Science

Department of Anthropology  
American Archaeology

Room 15 Switzler Hall  
Columbia, Missouri 65201  
Telephone (314) 882-8273

August 14, 1975

Dear Don:

Just talked to Evie who said you were having a hard time but all right, and also said you were up to reading letters, so thought I'd write one. She told me the other night about your "blade surgery" and I must admit I wasn't too surprised--probably you and I and a couple of others are the few people in the world that would rather go under a glass knife than a steel one--but can't you see it now--a note in American Antiquity on "Human Surgery with Prismatic Blades"--not only can we do wear pattern studies (doubt they'll be much except if the surgeon hit some bone--but we would also be able to get the surgeon's comments on the use of the glass vs. steel--why don't you try and get him to do that while it's still fresh in his mind. By the way, what kind of obsidian did he use. I am looking into the literature on use of obsidian in surgery. One of Bobby's graduate students in Milwaukee did a <sup>MA</sup>aster's thesis on trephination of skulls and found that this piqued the interest of surgeons in the use of obsidian for surgery and that it was used then--so I will write her and get the bibliography. Also one of the guys here says that his mother (who is a nurse) has mentioned that obsidian or glass is used in very ~~delicate~~ delicate surgery on the brain, so I am going to find out from her also. Who knows, maybe we can revive the market--and we'd just about have a monopoly in the field at that.

I am busy right now working on the trace substances grant for obsidian analysis. As soon as I have a working copy, I will send it to you. In our background research we have come up with --up to date--71 articles, including some that I haven't seen mentioned before in print because we have been going to the chemical and petrological journals. When I get a good copy I will send that along also, and if there are any articles you are interested in let me know. This grant is in conjunction with Environmental Trace Substances and these guys are rolling in dough--right now we are xeroxing all articles on any kind of trace substance ~~at~~ analytical technique in anthropology, neutron activation, emission spectoscopy (sp.??) and so on, so a couple of more won't make any difference. I am working also with the computer--and he and I don't get a long too well. I am trying to get this computerized storage and retrieval system working, and if I see one more "INVALID COMMAND STATEMENT" I may take an axe to it--it just doesn't do any good thought--it never does anything back to you. But September 1, back to the obsidian and hopefully will have more to report to you on that front. I heard from Hattula Moholy-Nagy and had asked her what color her projectile points were and she replied all gray. I really think it is intersting that there appears to be a strong preference among functional groups (not that these were necessarily used as projectiles, but the morphological group) by type of obsidian and this seems to extend from Teotihuacan times up

CC. 1.389

at least till Tula, and I bet through Aztec if I could find the stuff to look at. I know that the Aztec name for the war god was Gray Smoking Obsidian Mirror and the Toltec God was quite similar-- I wonder if the connection is not technical but one of ideology-- it would be I think quite interesting in the trace analysis studies showed that through time almost all projectles (at Tula actually it is simple all bifaces--large and small) are made from gray--but the sources are different. This would indicate to me that maybe we are dealing with something that the people thought and perceived-- a connection between color and use of an object, and so rarely as archeologists do these kinds of possibilities go along--when we get the trace substance work studies started, the projectile points are among the first to be analyzed, that's for sure.

Well, I have to go now and get back to the terminal.

All our love to you, and by the time you get this hope you are feeling much better.

*Alice*  
*Bunker*