

Route 1
Kimberly, Idaho 83341
July 29, 1966

Dr. Junius Bird, Curator
South American Archaeology
American Museum of Natural History
New York, New York 10024

Dear Dr. Bird:

How can I ever thank you for the beautiful obsidian I received today. The carton arrived in good shape and contained two large pieces weighing 230 pounds - large enough to make tools of adequate size. I am most anxious to get started making tools of this material, but it seems almost sacrilegious to apply the hammerstone. Please tell me what you would like made from this material. The obsidian appears to be geologically young, so should have good strength for making the Valley of Mexico polyhedral cores and blades. In the near future, I will make such a set for you.

This obsidian is quite different than any I have seen before. It is so dense it is almost black - even the edge of a very thin flake is almost opaque. However, one can see a trace of brown in the transmitted light. The material shows no sign of devitrification and it will be most interesting to examine its reaction to pressure and percussion. I have been most anxious to get obsidian of large size and this couldn't have made me happier.

We have just returned from a most interesting trip. At the invitation of Paul Martin, we went to the Field Museum school at Vernon and also the Grasshopper site at Cibecu, Arizona. Also on the way home we visited Wormington's early man site near Greely, Colorado where I was able to meet and compare notes with Norman Tindale, who is at Boulder for a year. The trip was most rewarding, for it gave me an opportunity to examine much lithic material.

At Vernon, I saw knives made on flakes with at least four types of backing similar to backed blades, but made on thick flakes and the workmanship followed definite patterns. Also found the metamorphosed quartzite of which they were made to be a most useful tool material. Thanks to you and your inquiry about this material, and also basalt, I found that the edges of the flakes work excellent as a saw to cut wood, antler, bone, etc. Much better than the fine-grained flakes with a sharper edge. They used the cortex of the quartzite cobble as a backing to protect the fingers. When I make this type of backed knife, or saw, on flakes from cobbles, the cores look just like the large scraper planes.

While at Grasshopper, a large black bear wandered into camp and we were able to kill him and then skin him with the stone tools I had been making for the students. The skinner, a professional, said the stone tools saved him at least an hour and a half over the steel knives. Dr. William Longacre, Univ. of Arizona, is going to publish on this incident and I shall see that you get a copy of the story.

Thank you again for taking your valuable time to send this material and I hope I can reciprocate in some small way.

Sincerely,

Cel. 5.4