

A REPORT ON THE 1970 NSF FLINTWORKING SCHOOL
DIERKEES LAKE, IDAHO

by Guy Muto
Idaho State University
Pocatello, Idaho

My feelings concerning the 1970 NSF Flintworking School are entirely positive. Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the school was its structure and setting. Here for the first time it was possible to spend an amount of time directed at the solution of flintworking problems. Time which was shared by interested parties, time which was used in actual experimentation rather than time spent in speculation. This extended period of stone working allowed me time to gain a proficiency which would have taken years had I acquired it in other ways.

Many concepts in lithic technology which are removed from the actual piece of stone are hard to comprehend from the literature. With material illustrations in hand, and the chance to manipulate the stone, these concepts become very clear. Without a doubt it was your many years of experience combined with your ability to verbalize specifics which led to the clarity of these concepts. It was a most valuable time for me in that your experience provided those of us at the school with a wealth of previous mistakes at our disposal. You frequently commented on how your mistakes or miscalculations have led to the development of new techniques and insights and your attitude in the exploitation of mistakes is of great value to any anthropologist whether he is a flint knapper or not.

I am not exaggerating when I say that every day I make use of something which I learned at the school. The following by-products of the school are worthwhile mentioning: (1) the fellowship of a small group of dedicated people sharing many interests; (2) the highly stimulating discussions resulting from the regional backgrounds of the different participants; and (3) the sense of a community which developed in such a short time.

One by-product which would be of interest to anthropologists in general, as well as the lithic specialist, was the pattern of living evidenced in the physical remains of the camp site. I have made some observations and taken some notes on the distribution of activity in specific areas. Some are group related such as the Mesoamerican blade producing area and some are individual such as "Carl's rock". All of the areas show well segregated and diagnostically distinguishable debitage. Since I did not notice this until about midway through the second week, I have no way of knowing why the choices were made but at least it was not structured by an outside force.

Below are listed the things which I felt were the outstanding features of the school. If it is changed or restructured, the strengths listed should be weighed in opposition to the new system.

Ca. 29-3.2.1

1. Small participation which allows full exploitation of your background and experience.
2. Adequate time and material which allows specialization in terms of individual interest.
3. Flexible structure which provides expansion into areas of group interest.
4. Selective acceptance in order to assure the use of technique, knowledge, and insight in the professional community.

Finally, I would like to say that for as much as I absorbed and the proficiency I gained, I could profit even more if I were to attend the school again. Thank you very much for the experience.

Ca. 29.3.2.2