

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

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I would like to take this more formal opportunity to send you my thoughts on the 1970 Summer Flintworking School.

It is clear to me that for training specialists in lithic technology there is no possible substitute for the experience of producing and using stone tools. I believe that any archaeologist without such a background in flintworking must be severely limited in his ability to deal with lithic artifacts. Progressive thinking in the area of lithic technology will necessarily be done by archaeologists versed in the theoretical and practical aspects of knapping. I need only point out that the old formal and pseudo-functional typologies are being questioned and revised particularly by people with background in flintworking.

Personally, I could not have begun my dissertation project with any degree of confidence (or competency) if it were not for last summer's experience in flintworking. Within three days of leaving Idaho I was in Ecuador faced with some formidable problems related to the lithic remains of Early Man. These problems have more or less demanded that I set up a lithic lab in order to approach the raw materials and (possible) lithic artifacts experimentally. Without a background in flintworking, I would have been unable to approach these early industries scientifically. As things stand now, my project has the potential to contribute significantly to our knowledge of early lithic industries in South America.

I also want to emphasize that the school was much more than a simple opportunity to learn flintworking. It was an unusual opportunity for several people interested in lithic technology to get together to exchange ideas intensively with you and with others of varied experience and background. A lot of intellectual cross-pollination took place, between dawn and midnight, and I know that several good ideas and projects have grown out of our meeting.

At the risk of embarrassing you, Don, I want to say that you were the inspiration for us all. My admiration for you as a craftsman and creative thinker grows daily as I work with lithic artifacts and problems of stone technology. You are doing paleoanthropology a great service by sharing your knowledge and knapping ability with students.

Another of the advantages of the school was its format. Knapping is the kind of thing that has to be learned in an unstructured way, with time for practice and experimentation--which was exactly the kind of arrangement we had. The indispensable part of the instruction was the individual attention which you gave to each of us. And part of the success of the school must be attributed to Guy Muto who was as generous as you in helping the novices. He was with us the whole time, helping with aspects

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of knapping and keeping our fireside discussions on lithic and archaeological topics stimulating. If ever the Flintworking School is enlarged, it would have to include a high proportion of experienced knappers, like Guy, in addition to yourself.

The month with you was the ideal way to be introduced to lithic technology. I learned a great, great deal, whereas I contributed rather less than the others who had relatively more experience with lithic artifacts. Since I consider the whole experience to be primarily important in stimulating new and better ideas, I think it is most profitable to train each summer, the most experienced students and professionals you can find, in order to build a strong core-group of lithic specialists. These specialists should take the responsibility for passing on what they have learned. I think that that responsibility is felt rather strongly by the 1970 group.

What I have written seems inadequate to communicate my enthusiasm for the Flintworking School. Again and again it comes home to me what value that training has had in the first few months of my work here. The National Science Foundation and the Idaho State University Museum should be proud of their school and of the important contribution they are making to lithic science.

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