

Oct. 19, 1966

Dear Francois:

What a joy to get your two letters. Somewhere over the Atlantic our letters must have passed like two ships in the night. I am so delighted with the results of your pressure flaking. A magnificent piece of work and also an excellent photo. You were certainly in good form. If this is your first attempt at this type of flaking, you will make King Tut turn over in his sarcophagus. I am so pleased that you are interested in the pressure work. By applying your wonderful knowledge of percussion to pressure, you will truly be the expert. Your knowledge is so needed in the Americas, as there are so many tool types that have gone unrecognized for a long time. Thanks to your instruction at Les Eyzies I was able to find in the discarded flakes of the Field Museum site in Arizona backed blades and flakes which you call "pocket knives". Some had cortex backing, others were backed by removing a single flake like a big burin and on others by a very steep retouch. It seems we have placed too much emphasis on projectiles, knives and scrapers here in the States. I am sure you would see so much more good diagnostic material.

I was interrupted while writing this letter, and have looked again at the photo of your work. I recall seeing a similar technique, the same angle of flakes, the same character of flake scars and the same spacing and termination of flakes. A replica of your work is in the National Museum of Copenhagen - it is the blade of the dagger, their finest piece of Danish stone work. I am sure you have an illustration of this piece. Your progress in pressure is remarkable and you have done in a short time what took me years. Since you have mastered this technique, I would like to have your opinion on another. This is to place in the palm of the left hand a piece of thick rubber (three quarters of an inch by three inches long and two and a half inches wide) and with a groove cut in the middle at a slight slant. Then place the back of the hand against the inside of the left thigh. The groove is for the flakes to travel on the underside of the biface. This type of support makes the flint feel dry. I don't know how else to describe it, but for some reason the flakes will feather out without either step or hinge fractures. One can then make a diamond shaped cross section such as the handles of the Danish knives or daggers. I find the flakes snap off differently than when using a simple pad in the left hand. You can use a solid rubber heel of a shoe for the piece of rubber. It seems to give better control of the flake termination. I don't know exactly why, but it gives the artifact a different character. Tell me what you think.

This Dorset point from the Arctic has me baffled at present. It has two large flakes removed from one side from the tip toward the base leaving a ridge down the median line and the flakes terminate in a hinge fracture. This technique removes a part of the marginal edges, leaving razor-sharp lateral edges. I can't see how such large flakes are removed with such a small platform ?????

I am most intrigued with your fine results in blade making by indirect percussion. I have been working on them, but have a long way to go. I have had my best results by using a clamp and anvil. If I haven't told you, I have a simple clamp made of two 2"X4"X7' pieces of wood. I then place the core between them and then wrap ten or fifteen turns of nylon cord to act as a fulcrum. Then by spreading them with short piece of wood and hammering it well home the core is really secured. It is better than any mechanical clamp. It is great for Polyhedral cores. If and when we can get together, it will save a lot of writing, for, as you know, I am not very good at it.

Please give our regards to Denise and your lovely family and thanks again for an opportunity to view your work.

Sincerely,  
Don

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