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Dear Tom:

Thanks for your letter of Oct. 15th and the photo of the handled knives. I am pleased to be kept informed of your interesting work in lithics. The beveling, due to the sharpening process, is interesting in that it appears to have been done unifacially. In some of my functional experiments I also find the unifacial sharpening much better than bifacial retouch. It leaves the edge much straighter and the cut can be made with a minimum of effort. I use an obsidian knife with unifacial retouch for slicing tomatoes except that during the cutting, the plano side is to the left - or next to the tomato - whereas the photo seems to have the plano side at the right side of the knife.

I use pressure to detach the flakes but first the platform is ground slightly to prevent it from crushing. The platform is removed with the flake leaving a razor-sharp edge. The same thing can be done by using a hardwood billet and percussion but not with as much accuracy as pressure. A hammerstone often crushes the edges more readily than when a billet of more yielding material is used. Richard Gould tells me that the Australian aborigines often use a piece of mulga wood for sharpening their stone tools.

The whale bone should prove to be excellent material for a percussor as it is less dense than that of the ungulates and could be taken from the different parts of the whale's anatomy, selecting bone that has the density to correspond with the stage of flaking.

Keep the obsidian samples. The colors seem to be unique and quite different from the rainbow obsidian of western U.S. I have more, if the samples are too small. I also have some aboriginal work in the same material but it would be of little value until the source is known. I hope I may keep the photo of the Egyptian knives.

Your information has been of much value to me to learn of technological differences and the exciting search for clues to man's behavior so widely separated geographically.

With best regards,

Don E. Crabtree