

# THE BELOW THE CENTER LINE CONCEPT

© *copyright 1996 by W.R. Knapp*

OK...I'll admit it. Just don't snicker and talk about it to anyone, OK? As a beginner, for the longest time, I just couldn't grasp the concept of the center line. Now I don't claim to be a genius, but still... I see myself as fairly quick on the draw. So what was the deal?

First I was confusing my working edge with the center line. Then when I realized that wasn't always so I had trouble visualizing just where it was. But finally I got it! Now it seems so painfully obvious to me I wonder why I had so much trouble with it. I don't feel too bad though, because on Craig Ratzats video "Caught Knapping" he says that this concept is a difficult one for some to grasp.

Mastering the center line concept can help you become a more successful knapper because it helps reduce breakage due to hitting too high into the mass of a preform. Later, as you gain experience, you will learn how to "cheat with the angles" so that you don't have to lose as much size due to taking off part of your edge to get below the centerline.

Well, let's explore the center line concept.

First of all understand that we're talking about the center line of the mass. Let's say you have a piece of stone worked down until it's fairly elliptical. It's a preform now. Hold the preform so that you're looking at it edge on. The drawing in Figure 1 shows this view.



**Fig.1**

As we look at this piece edge on, we imagine a line extending across the top surface, and also one skimming the bottom. This is depicted in figure one by the two light blue lines. Now all we do is split the distance between those two lines exactly in half and imagine a line that extends through the stone (purple dotted line in Fig.1). This is the center line of that mass.(Seems like it could be called "The Center Plane")

Here's the deal. Until you have lots of experience you must promise this to your flintknappin' self. EVERY time that you are about to strike a platform CHECK to be sure that the place where your billet will connect is **BELOW THE CENTER LINE**. Platforms made and struck below the center line make flakes. When you hit above the center line you fold the piece!