

August 14, 1978

Elizabeth Mecham  
Rt. #1, Box 416  
Bayside, Ca. 95524

Dear Mrs. Mecham:

Thank you for your July 14 letter. I enjoyed reading it over several times. I am sorry I did not answer sooner; there is always a crush of visitors in the summer. Somedays, I talk for most of a whole day to patrons. The time slips by so quickly.

You mentioned George Hanson camping at Nadeau's stone corral and picking currents. How far is this site from Darwin? Also, do you recall George Hansen or other Panamint Indians camping at other spots in the summer? Did the Indians at Cole Spring move around much during the year? Do you remember the Frank Bellas family? Did any Coso Indians go to Little Lake and if so, was there any particular trail?

You stated the Panamint Indians and Shoshones did not go often to Coso Hot Springs. Do you recall the Owens Valley Paiutes coming to the Hot Springs and their beliefs and practices regarding the Springs?

I found your statement about baking ground currants most interesting. I am enclosing a berry which grows on the creeks in Independence. Perhaps this is the currant. Do you recall any other Indian foods and methods of preparation? I understand the Coso, Shoshone and perhaps others collected Mesquite, screw bean, Joshua tree blooms, Chuckawallas, a kind of rodent,



perhaps turtles and a number of greens in the Spring.

Recently, a Coso Shoshone living in Fort Independence told me the old Indians use to keep track of the seasons by observing the risings of the sun and would use a stick or sticks to mark the course of the sun from winter to summer. Also they use to predict and control the weather. Do you recall anything about the Indians' calendar, astronomy or weather prediction?

The Owens Valley Paiute use to irrigate some of their lands to encourage the growth of wild plant foods. Did the Coso, Panamint or Saline Valley peoples ever practice any form of irrigation in the Spring?

The other day a visitor was enquiring about where the Panamint, Coso and Saline people got their basketmaking materials such as the lemon colored strands which comprise some of their designs. Perhaps you know?

As you can see this is another rambling letter, yet the questions are so important. More importantly, you are the only person I know of who can answer them.

The weather here has been cloudy and humid for the last week. But in the last two days it has been breezy with lower temperatures (in the 90's). The Museum visitor flow is heavy. There is a continuing and slow change in the exhibit arrangements. I have been doing some irrigating for the trees along with paper work and research. The Navy is sponsoring a Coso Hot Springs geothermal workshop on August 17 and 18 in Lone Pine. I wish you could be there. Also I wish I could accompany you on a trip to Darwin someday.

Sincerely,

Charles N. Irwin  
Director

CNI/vac

enclosure