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“I liked to log by the seat of my pants,” Griffiths says. “Some of the trees we cut in the old days were 300 feet high and six to eight feet across at the butt. I liked hand buckin’ – pulling the old Swedish fiddle. I got all the hard jobs working on steep ground. Finally I said to my partner, maybe I’ll get a buckin’ machine so we get some good ground to work on.”

In the 1940s, power saws or bucking machines, weighted about 150 pounds and had handles on them like a wheelbarrow and a bar that swiveled into a bucking or felling position. It wasn’t unusual for the machine to kick back and many loggers got the pipe rammed into their stomachs.

But when Bus exchanged his Swedish fiddle for a power saw, he mastered it the same way he did every other job in the woods,

The man that everyone knows as Bus was born in Moose Jaw, Sask., in 1913. For the first few years of his life he was called Gilbert. then one day, shortly after the family moved to Petition, Bus accompanied his mother to the meat market. “that’s a real little buster you’ve got there,” the butcher declared, creating a nickname that would last a lifetime.

Bus got his first logging job when he was 12. His family was living in Burnaby at the time and his dad hired an old faller called Cariboo Harry to take down a fir that threatened to blow over on the chicken coop.

When Bus said he wanted to fell trees like Cariboo Harry, his dad gave him an axe and told him he was in charge of supplying wood for the cook stove. A



The Hand Fallers, a historically accurate painting by Bus Griffiths, is now part of the Courtenay and District Museum's permanent collection

large stand of alders behind the house was Bus' training ground and he smiles when he remembers how he "had trees hung up all over the place and nearly killed himself."

Bus didn't plan on making a living in the woods. A business course in Vancouver landed him an office job with Massey-Harris but when the Depression hit, Bus was laid off and took the first job that came along – chopping cordwood.

When that job ended, he started cutting shingle bolts on Burke Mountain above Port Coquitlam on the Lower Mainland. Every time Bus saw a logging truck come up the road he ran out and asked for a job. Finally the bull-bucker drove by and asked Bus when he was going to fell a big cedar that was standing by the road.

"That cedar was eight feet across at the stump and I fell it towards the road where the logging trucks went by. It looked pretty good, this great big tree just laying there," Bus remembers. "The next time the bull bucker drove by he offered me a job."

From that day on, Bus worked in various logging camps taking every job that came along, Soon he was experienced at rigging, chasing, loading, felling, booming and road building. The fall of 1944 found him working for Jack Fletcher building a road into a timber claim near the Tsable River on central Vancouver Island.

"Jack was an odd sort of character," Bus recalls. "He figured if you worked for him, the main thing in your life was the job."

"Fletcher'd always be there first thing in the morning to make sure we started on time. And he'd be there at quitting time to make sure you worked until five," Bus continues. "He had this watch tucked in his pants on a cord and he'd turn his back and you'd see him sneak a peek at the watch – not everyone had a watch in those days.

Finally one of the guys would say, 'It must be getting close to quitting time,' and Fletcher would pull his watch out and say, 'Oh! It's after 5:30 – I had no idea it was so late, even though he'd looked at this watch 10 minutes before. There was no overtime in those days.'

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