

## **BAD ACCIDENT 17 YEARS AGO ENDED BUD'S LOGGING CAREER 11/28/95**

I have discussed at length and in some detail the dangers of logging as an occupation. There is no question that the importance of safety training cannot be overemphasized. As in every way of life, there are pitfalls that can never be controlled or anticipated. I submit the following real-life example to illustrate some.

It's September 7, 1978, and Clayton Gribneau Jr., better known as Buddy, is cutting standing timber on International Paper Company lands near Woods Lake. He was far from being a novice, although he had little formal safety training. Like many of his contemporaries that era, he had been well trained under the tutelage of his father, an experienced logger.

Pat Gagnon was running the skidder, moving the merchantable stems to the landing. Pat was a capable and experienced logger in his own right, which played an important part in the outcome of the incident that occurred.

The terrain they were working one was steep and laced with rock ledges. Bud had just dropped a large hard maple when he caught some movement out of the corner of his eye. The movement was the top of another tree that was tumbling off the ledge above him. He was struck across the back by a large limb, which drove him into the ground.

His face was imbedded in deep mud and he was unable to breathe. Fortunately, one arm was free and he was able to dig away the mud so that he could breathe once more. As he lay there, he realized there was little he could do to help himself. The real danger was that when Pat returned for his next hitch, unaware of his dilemma, he might attempt to push the tree out of his skid trail.

Bud lay there patiently listening to the sounds of the skidder as it made its rounds to the landing and back. When he heard the machine approaching, with his one good arm he was able to grasp a protruding limb and shake it as vigorously as possible.

Pat Gagnon's experience enabled him to quickly analyze the situation and he immediately saw the movement of the branch. Halting the skidder, he quickly cut the tree, freeing Buddy. He then made him as comfortable as possible before heading to Big Moose for help.

It took the Big Moose ambulance crew nearly three hours to get Buddy off the steep hill and out of the woods.

All of Buddy's ribs were broken on one side and two on the other, in addition one lung had been punctured. His right leg, which had been pinned up under his chest, was shattered several places below the knee. He spent a month in the hospital and several years recuperating before being able to work at some other occupation.

As I interviewed him 17 years later, the strain and anxiety of the event was still evident in his voice. He realized how fortunate he was to be alive.

When asked if his ordeal had dampened his enthusiasm for logging, his reply reinforced my faith and admiration for all loggers:

“If I still had two good legs I would still be logging.”