



## The History of *The Swanson Undercut*

One of the commonly used undercuts in hand falling today was created by two local BC fallers over five decades ago. George Swanson and his brother-in-law Harold Gienger, now retired fallers with over 30 years of experience, started their careers in 1957 working for their uncle in Spuzzum, BC.

We spoke to George about The Swanson Cut and he explained how it came to be. As George and Harold's falling careers progressed, they were falling in various cut blocks in Nitnat in the late 60's and on King Island in 1979/80's. They realized when they were up-slope falling in ravines that some of the wood they were felling was being wasted as the trees were breaking during the fall. They soon started to experiment with various cuts to try and find a method that would minimize the breakage and conserve the timber.

They developed a special cut, later coined the Swanson Cut, with the purpose of causing the base of the tree to slide off the stump and slow the top of the tree down during the tree's fall; therefore, minimizing breakage and conserving the fiber. Once George and Harold perfected the cut, they taught the fallers at King Island the method and it soon became common practice amongst fallers throughout BC. It is now a common method used in the BC Faller Training Standard.



The Swanson Undercut



George Swanson

We asked George how he came up with this method. He explained "We just looked at the problem and experimented with different cut techniques to try and make it easier and more efficient to try and save the wood."

Our BCFSC Falling Safety Advisors, Scott Rushton and David Adshead, said the Swanson cut is considered best practice today for upslope falling and said the cut acts to de-energize the tree. They agree the cut is a safe practice and that it helps to conserve the timber.

The Swanson Undercut is described as a Humbolt Undercut with a portion of the front face of the stump removed

that causes the butt to strike ground first. It removes the whipping action and holds the wood on steep slopes. To learn more about The Swanson Cut – watch the BC Faller Training Standard Video on Undercuts from WorkSafeBC.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1hHzJYUUSc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1hHzJYUUSc)