

Two Bulls rule the woods for Timber Days

Retired loggers, longtime friends share title

BY SOPHIA ALDOUS
OF THE MINER

PRIEST RIVER – Timber Days festival-goers in 2019 are getting double the fun since there are two Bulls of The Woods at this year's event. Leonard Davas, 87, and Robert Bombino, 73, are sharing the honorary title at the annual Timber Days Celebration in Priest River Friday and Saturday, July 26-27. It makes sense, since both men are known in the Pend Oreille River Valley for their lifetime experience in the timber industry.

Davas, who lives with his wife of 63 years, Gladys, 82, on the land where his grandmother grew up near Cusick, can still recall the log flume that ran down the creek near his property. The logs were swept out to the Pend Oreille River and picked up on the other side of the river. The railroad also ran from what was formerly the Diamond Match Mill that resided on the back of the Davas's property before both the mill and railroad was shut down in the late 1930s, early '40s.

people, my stepdad was a timber man," Davas says. "You could say it's in my blood."

After graduating from Cusick High School, Davas enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served in Korea and Adak, Alaska, before returning to the Pend Oreille River Valley area. For several years he drove a logging truck for Diamond Match, then purchased his own logging truck to haul timber in Superior, Mont. The Davases operated a chain-saw and logging equipment shop out of what was formerly Curley's Gas Station in Priest River for more than 27 years. They lived in Priest River for more than 40 years, raising their five children and volunteering for Timber Days. Both Leonard and Gladys recall the raucous good times that Timber Days were when they were a young couple.

"There were so many bars and restaurants," Gladys says. "There would be water fights with the fire department and dances in the evening."

Priest River resident and fellow Bull of The Woods, Robert Bombino, echoes that sentiment.

"They would close the streets off for the whole weekend," says Bombino, who lives with his wife, Donna, of 52 years. "There was a carnival and you would just plan to spend the whole weekend having fun. You cut the kids loose and have a good time."



MINER PHOTO/SOPHIA ALDOUS

"I loved being outside, being out in the open with nobody breathing down your neck," Robert Bombino says of his time working in the timber industry. He is also the 2019 Bull of The Woods.

moved back to Priest River when he was a baby. His grandparents homesteaded in what is known as the Italian Settlement in Priest River, so his parents came back to work in timber and raise cattle.

Bombino and Donna were high school sweethearts and married in 1967. Bombino graduated in 1963 and went right to work as a logger. He worked on jammers, skidding and loading logs onto trucks. Most days he would wake up at 5 a.m. and return in the early evening. During the

and crews would work until 8 a.m.

"I'm grateful to my wife for waking up with me to make me breakfast and lunch and see me out the door all those years," Bombino says.

Both Davas and Bombino point out the most dangerous aspect of their job working in the woods was not the wildlife. It was the logging itself.

"You had to pay attention, all the time, because of all the loud, heavy equipment," Bombino says. "You had to pay attention to your surroundings and know where the other guy was, especially

when you were felling trees. And be honest. Don't try to do something that you know you can't do."

"Safety first," Davas says. "There ain't no room for showing off. That gets people hurt, or worse."

Bombino says the worst injury he received was a badly sprained ankle when he stepped into a shallow hole and got his foot caught in a snag. When he thinks about it, he smiles.

"I saw bear, cougars, caribou, moose, all kinds of animals, and the only thing that ever hurt me was a hole in the ground,"

he chuckles. "Well, not counting the mosquitoes and horseflies. Those could be a real pain."

He recalls once when a fellow crewmember went into the woods to go to the bathroom and shortly after he returned, the man began to thrash around yelling, "Kill it, kill it!"

"We were looking at him like, 'Kill what?' He was jumping around and we couldn't see anything on him," Bombino says.

As it turned out, when the man went to put his suspenders back on after using the bathroom, he

SEE BULLS, 5C

**Congrats to
Robert Bombino &
Leonard "Curly" Davas**
2019 Bulls of The Woods

from your
**Bonner County
Commissioner, Dist. 2**
Jeff Connolly



as a lifelong resident, former logger & Bull of The Woods 2016

**I Salute You Robert & Curly
& Our Community
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