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By Colonel Mark "Two Gun" Lisi, USA (Ret.)

In my youth I got my hands on an original copy of *The Best of Sports Afield*, published in 1935. I was taken by an article – written by a real buffalo hunter – called "Running Buff." The author's voice was that of a crusty, cantankerous old man, who only knew how to speak the truth. I wish I owned the book today. Oh, how I wanted to hunt buffalo back then in the mid 70s. I am a great fan of American Manifest Destiny, westward expansion, and the history of the West. Hunting buffalo, or "running buff" in the arcane lexicon of the old buffalo hunter, was and still is my dream. Today, I have the time and the resources to pull such an event together. With the help of a fine young soldier who once managed the herd I hunted, I was able to Run Buff in 2010.

My first attempt at hunting buffalo was not very satisfying. A friend set up my hunt for a "meat bull" at a buffalo ranch. I knew very little about this place and – to shorten the story a bit – the rancher directed me to shoot one of the five young bulls in the corral. I used a .54-caliber Hawken muzzleloader as a hedge against a canned hunt, but even the coal burner couldn't bridge this gap. Before the booing and hissing starts, I had just driven 700 miles and I WAS going to pull the trigger. No, it was not hunting; it was akin to capping a Holstein on a dairy farm.

Any of the readers of *The Blue Press* can do a web search for buffalo hunting and find pages and pages of buffalo ranches offering hunting packages. At the end of the day, there are only a few places left where there are wild herds of buffalo that can be hunted: British Columbia, Montana, Alaska, Utah and Arizona. However, there are ranch herds throughout the West. Buffalo on these ranches are purchased on the hoof, and the hunter gets after them with his or her weapon of choice. CAVEAT! A fenced 40-acre pasture – while better than the coral I shot "Bob" in – is still not hunting. There are reputable operations that require walking, glassing, stalking and marksmanship before the hunter can close the deal. The C. Sharps Arms Company has a relationship with such a ranch in Nebraska, and there is a ranch in Kansas that offers throwback buffalo hunting where the hunter arrives in camp via wagon, sleeps in a sod hut and hunts from horseback. There are quality experiences to be found for the hunter who wishes to "Run Buff" with the likes of Billy Dixon.

I'm fortunate enough to work with a member of the Assiniboine Tribe from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Montana. One morning he asked, "Sir, do you want to hunt buffalo?" Of course I did, and the adventure began. Fort Belknap is 800 miles east of here. I called another student of the west, Colonel (Ret.) Stu Hamilton and asked him if



would like to go with me. The financial requirements were: \$600 for a cow, \$1000 for an adult bull, and \$3000 for a trophy bull. We also had to employ a tribal guide at a cost of \$300.

Mark, the Staff Sergeant with whom I work, once ran the Fort Belknap Buffalo Program and expects to rejoin the Buffalo Program when he retires from the Army. He explained that the Fort Belknap herd – about 450 buffalo – have little human contact, are only handled once a year and that they don't like trucks. I mailed a down payment, selected a mid-December hunting window, and Stu and I started working with our Sharps rifles.

GUNS

I selected my 1875 C. Sharps in 45-70. I also opted to shoot smokeless powder. I loaded some 405-grain semi-jacketed flat point bullets on the low end of the .45-70 spectrum for the buffalo hunt. I crunched the numbers and figured the bullets were smoking out at about 1300 feet per second. Slow, I know, but all the literature indicates that "magnum" .45-70 loads should not be fired in a Sharps. I selected smokeless powder because I can be lazy, and black powder ammo demands that you CLEAN your rifle right away. Colonel Hamilton used store-bought Buffalo Arms black powder cartridges with 405-grain lead round nose bullets in his C. Sharps 1874.