

# BUFFALO on the GREAT PLAINS

– LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #58 –

A 650 grain lead slug, one half inch in diameter, moving across the prairie at about 1250 feet per second; what in the world would something like that be good for? Buffalo! At least that was the thought in 1872, the year Sharps introduced the 50/90 Sharps cartridge, and again in 2005 – on this buffalo hunt.

The 50/90, often called the 'Big 50', was the biggest and baddest of the buffalo cartridges, which for me at least was a good reason to want a rifle so

chambered. And let's not forget that Billy Dixon used the 50-90 Sharps for his miraculous shot at Adobe Walls, Texas in 1874.

Growing up in the fifties and sixties, there were still a few buffalo nickels in

circulation, and of course buffalo were often depicted in the western comics. So, I knew what a buffalo looked like; but it was 1971 at Custer State Park, South Dakota where I first saw one.

They say the heaviest, thickest hides are taken during the coldest part of winter – January and February; by March the bulls begin rubbing, in preparation for spring. We were there in early January; the weather was beautiful – clear skies and bright sunshine, but the high daytime temperature was negative 5 degrees Fahrenheit.

The hunt itself was pretty routine; we drove out on the ranch, away from headquarters, and into a rolling pasture containing 4,000 acres (a little over six square miles). During the fall roundup, they had separated the seven and



*This is an old bull, with a prime hide. Yes, it was really cold!*

eight year old bulls from the herd and moved them

**"...one particular bull that had massive horns..."**

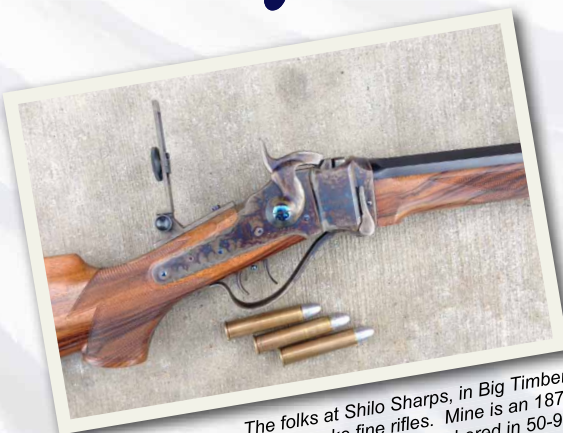
into this pasture. These were the most-desirable trophies, and no longer prime breeding stock, so the ranch wanted to cull them from the herd.

The bulls were in small groups of ten to 40 animals, and weren't afraid of the pickup – holding and facing us about 100 yards off. We drove around for a spell, looking over several small herds and finally decided on one particular bull that had massive horns, lots of dark hair on his head and rump, but with tan hair on his shoulders. I slipped out of the pickup, took a sitting position with crossed sticks and fired. The 650 grain lead slug met a ton of meat and bones. The old time buffalo hunters, of the 1870's wouldn't have had it so easy.

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Fort Pierre, South Dakota  
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**Midway**



*The folks at Shilo Sharps, in Big Timber, Montana make fine rifles. Mine is an 1874 Long Range Express, chambered in 50-90, with several custom features.*