



Rino taking some practise shots kneeling, to get his eye in with the 45/70 rifle

# HUNTING THE



# AMERICAN BISON

By: Chris Dean

There are few things that can beat that sense of achievement one feels when you track your quarry for days and it becomes a test of endurance.

In New Mexico: Rino Chiappa, General Director of the Chiappa Group is enjoying the emotion of traditional hunting, together with Ron Norton – President of Chiappa Firearms in Dayton and the friends of the Bonanza Creek Ranch in Santa Fe. “For two generations we have been producing replicas of the most famous firearms models which, one century or one and a half ago, were used for military purpose and for hunting. I wanted to try first-

hand what it meant to hunt with a 1886 Lever Action, the last model produced by Armi Sport. It was a stirring experience that I’ll never forget”.

Rino said that his expectations were very far from the experience he went through. He thought that the Bison hunt organised in a special preserve would be a sort of vacation with an “extra thrill” for tourists. He would never have expected that he would have to endure



Test firing using shooting sticks as a rest



Rino on horseback trailing the Bison herd





Bonanza creek - Cowboys on the porch like in the old westerns

the fatigue of trailing the buffalo for a whole week, on horseback from morning till evening, with a severe cold and temperatures constantly below zero.

#### The Hunt

The Bison was covering huge distances in the 5000 acres area, and as early as the second day the strain and the longing to find it had already transformed the participants, creating a strong determination, an ancient drive, the true spirit of hunting.

"I consider myself a very civilised person, I am a fan of technology and feel strongly focused on the future. I did not believe I would feel so strongly and so involved, but when you hunt down a prey for days, enduring a thousand strains and hardships, your sole desire is to find it and beat it".

There have been many moving moments: living many days in the open with your pals among breathtaking landscapes and learning to survive in a tough environment is like rebuilding a part of yourself that seems to be buried under our cultural superstructure.

The final part of the hunt was a great satisfaction to Rino.

After following the Bison herds around and eventually tracking one

down, the stalk began. The Bison male moved in and out dense shrub and bush veld.

Rino had his rifle ready and proceeded on foot to get within striking distance of the huge Bison bull.

The 1886 rifle Rino used was the calibre 45/70. The Bison that Rino was stalking was a 12 years old specimen weighing approximately 2200 pounds. Rino stalked the Bison until he got into a good shooting position. Everybody held their breath and waited for Rino to take his shot. His first shot was a fatal lung shot and a second shot in quick succession was at the shoulder that dropped the Bison in its tracks. The 45/70 did its job, just as it was expected to.

The joy and relief was great after such a long trek and the anticipation of finally getting his Bison was obvious to see on Rino's face. It was a proud and satisfied hunter that took his place next to his trophy for a photo.

#### The Rifle

"The rifle Model 1886, though an initial production prototype, yielded an excellent performance, with a very smooth action and impeccable precision and power". The 1886 Lever Action model by



Stalking the bison in the dense scrubland



Bison spotted





Rino and his 2200 pound Bison trophy

Chiappa Firearms is on the international market and available in South Africa. Serious production had already started and the first deliveries were forecasted by the end of July 2010 for the version in calibre 45/70 and octagonal 26" barrel. At the end of 2010, the other three versions were made available. Those are the rifles in calibre .444 Marlin (8 + 1 rounds) and the carbine with 22" barrel (7+1 rounds) in both calibres. The weight is 9 lbs (about 4 kg) for the rifle and 8 lbs (about 3,5 kg) for the carbine, with an overall length of 45" (114 cm) and 41" (104 cm) respectively. Receiver, lever, butt plate and forend tip are colour case hardened, while the breech block, barrel loading gate are blued.

Legacy's 1886 reincarnation is a 129-year-old design. What you see is what you get. It has no warning lights, ding-dong or automatic safety overrides. The user must be his own safety device because the rifle has no manual safety. When this rifle was first introduced, the principle of the half cock notch on the hammer was well understood. Carried with a loaded chamber and the hammer fully down will leave the firing pin which is longer than its bolt channel, touching the hammer at the rear and extending out through the breech face at the front, resting squarely on the primer of the chambered round.

Something that is not advisable. The .45-70 calibre is very effective on deer, elk, bear and moose with the right load. Various ammo makers are supporting the old cartridge very well with thoroughly up-to-date bullet designs.

This reliable lever action in a heavy calibre such as the .45-70 can be very comforting in the hand, and with the right load, you can bring down any game animal on the American continent.

#### Spreading the joy of a successful hunt.

It took more than five hours' work for the hunters to quarter and pack out the meat, which was donated to the Santa Fe orphanage. Rino feels enthusiastic about this experience. I believe in traditional hunting that is to say hunting without sophisticated firearms, and always supported and sponsored it. But now that I tried it personally, I feel it of a moral value, a personal growth for me towards a deep relation with nature".

For more information : [www.chiappafirearms.com](http://www.chiappafirearms.com) or visit one of the dealerships in South Africa: City Guns, Suburban Guns, Classic Arms or NSN Guns & Ammo.



Hunters landscape



Standing around a campfire with friends, moments to remember