

# RATTLESNAKE at THREE STEPS

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #47 —

Prairie dog hunting in the Shirley Basin, north of Medicine Bow, Wyoming was one of my favorite past times in the 1980s and 1990s. Back then, the more remote areas had seen little or no shooting pressure and were lots of fun. During many of those years, I would make two week-long trips, one in June or July with the kids and some Midway managers and a second trip in September, with Joe Callahan, a friend from Remington.

I've always enjoyed guns, gunsmithing, reloading and shooting – and found that prairie dog hunting (shooting) provided a great opportunity to enjoy all four. During one of the fall trips with Joe, we had positioned ourselves on opposite sides of a long, narrow ridge about 50 yards apart, laying on the ground and shooting from the prone position out into the valleys below. The shots were mostly 150-250 yards.

When the shooting slowed down on my side, I headed over to the other side of the ridge to see how Joe was doing. Hadn't gone far when right in front of me was a four foot rattlesnake laying directly across my path – about three steps away. My S&W Model 28 was in the pickup, but I was carrying a Remington 700 in 222, with a 10 power scope -- not an ideal rig for shooting at three steps, but shoot I did. With the cross hairs on his head, which was only half-way in focus, I pulled the trigger. There's no way to know if the bullet actually hit the snake directly, but the 50 grain bullet travelling at 3,000 fps created quite a crater

in the sand and gravel of the high semi-arid prairie, and the snake's head was gone when the dust cleared.

I picked him up by the tail and walked on over to present him to Joe, who was still blasting away. Catching my movement in his peripheral vision, he turned and smiled as I approached;

**"...not an ideal rig for shooting at three steps..."**

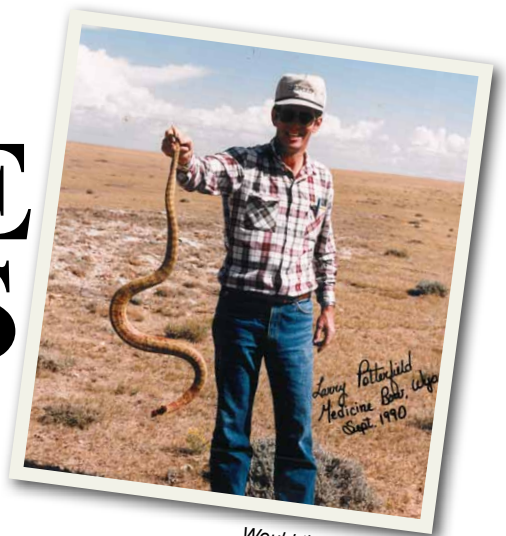
but then he immediately jerked away and his eyes got really big when he saw this huge rattlesnake, still twisting around in my hand.

We had a good laugh and took some pictures, after which I made a mental note to pay more attention when walking around in prairie dog towns. Three steps is about as close as I care to get to a rattlesnake.

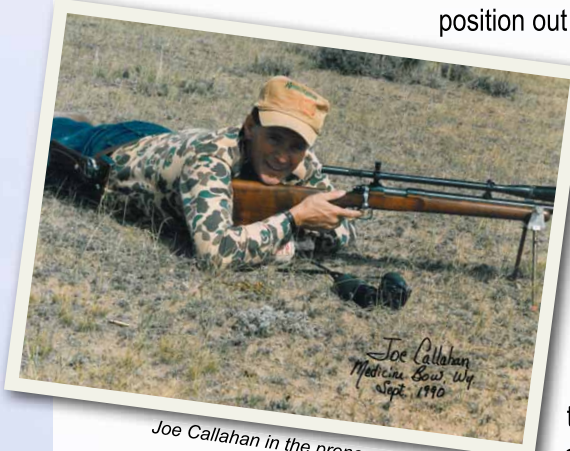
Larry Potterfield

The Shirley Basin  
Just north of Medicine Bow,  
Wyoming  
September 1990

**USA**  
**Midway**



*Would this scare you?*



*Joe Callahan in the prone position, with a 40-X Remington in 222*



*The tail end has the rattles, which is how rattlesnakes get their name.*