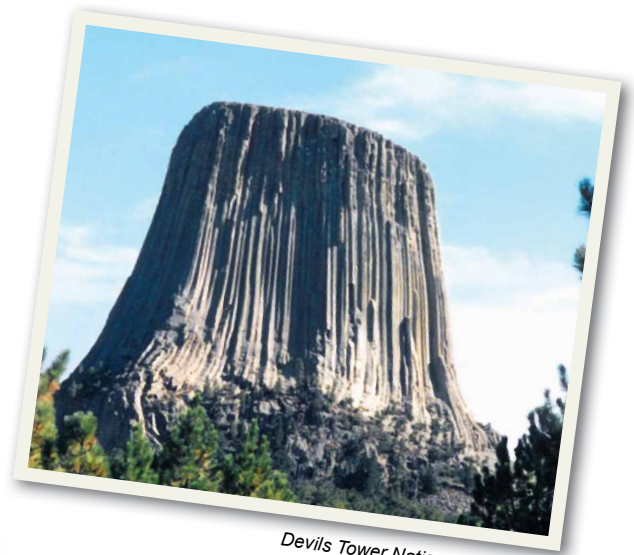


How the PRAIRIE DOG

Changed My Life

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #53 —



Devils Tower National Monument

In August of 1971, during a short vacation between college and the Air Force, Brenda and I drove to Devils Tower National Monument, in northeast Wyoming; it was there that I first saw prairie dogs. You could call them cute, but you certainly have to call them obnoxious and destructive, as they were always barking and their dens destroyed the ground for any possible grazing by other wildlife.

Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota, just east of Rapid City and the Black Hills, was my last assignment and my first experience with prairie dog shooting; and wow, for me it was a life-changing event. That part of the country is truly a sportsman's paradise, with plenty of whitetails, mule deer and antelope -- plus ducks, turkeys and prairie chickens; and then, there's fishing -- year round. I enjoyed everything, but what impressed me

most was the prairie dog shooting -- as I like shooting equally as much as I like hunting.

Now, prairie dog shooting covers four different disciplines -- all of which I enjoy. First is buying guns; then a little gunsmithing to make them more accurate and keep them shooting; of

course lots of reloading to make things more affordable; and last, pulling the trigger -- learning to judge distance and the wind. There is a lot of opportunity to learn in all four of these disciplines.

My first prairie dog rifle, in the fall of 1974, was a Husqvarna 1950 in 270 Winchester. Actually, this was my deer rifle, but it was all I had; and it only took one afternoon to realize this wasn't a prairie dog rifle. My buddy was

shooting a Remington 721 in 222 Remington, with a 10 power Weaver scope -- which seemed to be a pretty good rig; the 223 Remington hadn't really 'launched' at that time. I also had a S&W Model 39 in 9mm, which I used a bit for close work, but learned to prefer a revolver over a semi-auto for prairie dogs.

**"...truly a sportsman's
paradise..."**

After service, I hunted a few more times

in South Dakota, but then switched to the area around Medicine Bow, Wyoming, which was a little closer with more prairie dogs.

Through the years, I bought and sold many rifles, pulled the trigger thousands of times, did a fair bit of gunsmithing and lots and lots of reloading. Unquestionably the prairie dog changed my life.

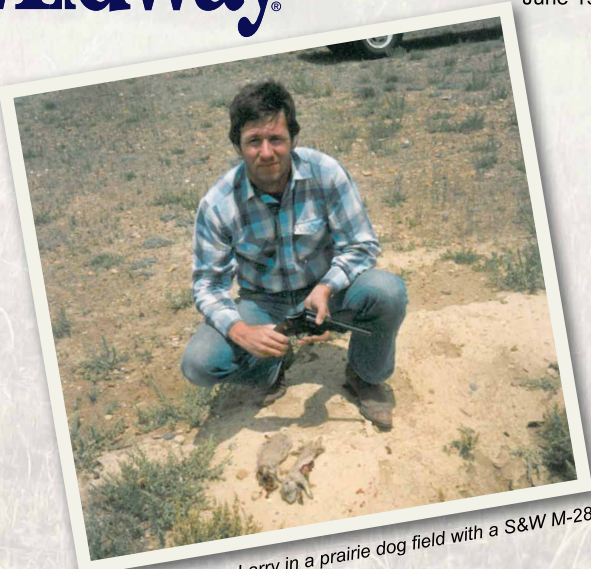
USA
Midway

Larry Potterfield

Medicine Bow
Wyoming
June 1996



The white-tailed prairie dog is a prolific breeder and plays havoc on the western grasslands.



Larry in a prairie dog field with a S&W M-28.