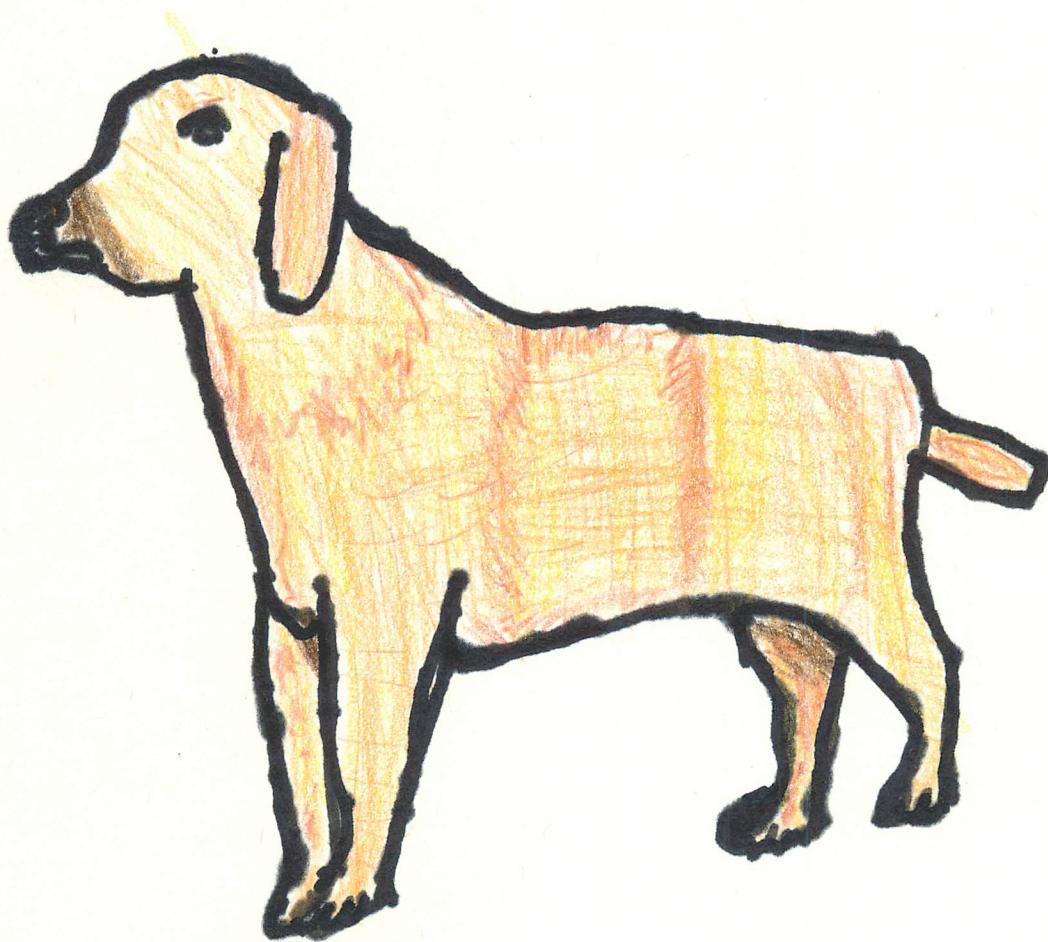


Old Yeller



by Fred Gipson

adapted by Finnegan Granholm



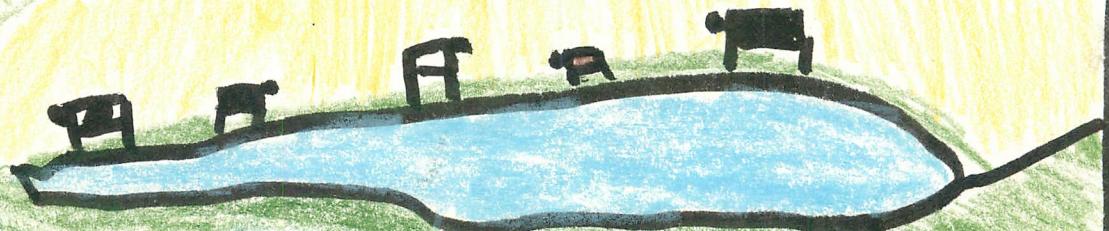
We called him Old Yeller For two reasons: he had a dingy yellowish coat we called "yeller," and when he barked, it came out more like a yell. He showed up in the late 1860s when I was 14 and we were living in our log cabin on Birdsong Creek in North Texas.



Times were tough. Papa talked it over with Mama and they decided he would ride 600 miles north to Abilene.

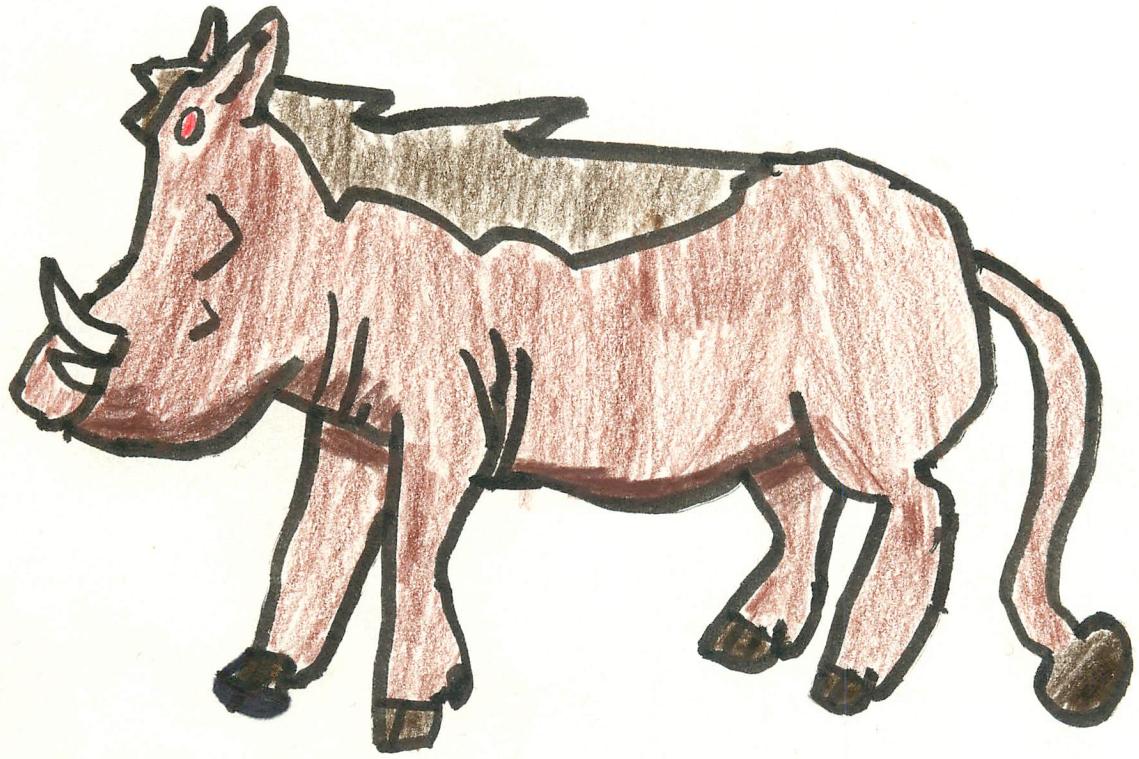
Papa was planning to make money by selling cattle, and left me in charge of Mama, my little brother Artiss, and our land.

One day I went out back to get some meat we'd been drying, and instead I saw a big yeller dog. He was real skinny, but his swollen stomach gave away what happened to the meat. I was about to chase him off when Arliss came running past me! He yelled, "He's my dog!" Just like that, we had a dog, and not a good one, either.





I started changing my mind about Old Yeller after that day the bear attacked. I was working when I heard Arliss scream. You see, Arliss screams for fun. This time was different, though. Mixed up with that was a whimpering that couldn't come from him. I sprinted there and found Arliss holding on to the leg of a black bear cub. The bear was trying to get away, but Arliss was holding on for all his worth - too frightened to let go. Then the mama bear came up and tried to attack Arliss, but Old Yeller fought her off. Arliss never messed with a bear cub again!



The next time Old Yeller really saved me was when I was marking our hogs. You take a pig and you make your family's mark in his ear. I was marking a pig when I fell right into a pack of boiling mad javelina hogs. They would have killed me if it hadn't been for Old Yeller. I got tusked right in the leg with a big gash. Old Yeller took most of the hurt, though.



Our neighbor Bud Searcy told us there was a bad disease called hydrophobia going around. Once an animal caught it, it acted weirdly and started trying to bite everything. Old Yeller was still weak from the hogs' attack, and a wolf with bad hydrophobia tried to attack Mama and Lisbeth, Bud Searcy's granddaughter. Old Yeller bravely fought off the wolf, and saved us again.



The thing is, Old Yeller got bitten by that mad wolf. Mama said it was good that he saved us, but it was bad for Old Yeller. We knew he would get sick with the hydrophobia soon. It was the hardest thing I ever did, but I had to let Old Yeller leave this world.



My heart hurt. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't do anything. Papa came home with a horse for me, but I didn't care. Then Lisbeth brought over

a pup that Old Yeller had with her dog. Before I knew it, that rascal stole a piece of cornbread! My heart came back with all those feelings I hadn't felt since Old Yeller died, and I started laughing. I laughed until I cried. That pup sure is like his papa!

The End