

Odd Animal Behavior

I was probably about five years old at the time. Our tiny white house was situated on a dirt road at the edge of a small village in southern Oklahoma. The time was late summer. That meant going barefoot, playing *Hide-and-Seek* after sundown with neighborhood children, and sitting on quilts on the lawn while counting “shooting stars” across the eastern horizon.

The neighborhood men, home from work, washed and fed, were seated on our front porch and on the lawn, listening with my dad to the broadcast of Joe Louis, world champion heavyweight boxer. My dad, glued to the set, envisioned every throw and jab of left and right, while the women visited among themselves, and we children played tag and other running games.

A small, yellow-haired dog ran up, darting in and out of our small group. Perhaps I became more aggressive than I should have, or I touched the animal and scared it. For whatever reason, the little fellow nipped my ankle.

He didn't break the skin, but the sensation of his teeth on my flesh scared and infuriated me. I dived for him, but he saw me coming and darted out of our yard and down the road. Finally, after about a half-block, panting breathlessly, I caught the rascal.

Holding him with both hands, I knelt and bit him back. The instant I felt his hair on my tongue, the thought popped into my mind: *My friends and all the adults in the neighborhood watched me chase the dog, grip him with both hands, and kneel to bite him.*

They must have thought, *What odd animal behavior. And the dog was odd, too.*