

WILLIE RUNS AMUCK

by Tom & Joan Heinrich

Willie, a mighty fine walleye, was cruising glacial Lake Agassiz on the prowl for perch when a brilliant light and mighty roar erupted overhead. He was popped on the noggin by a bit of the meteoroid when it smacked the inland sea. The cataclysm ruptured a new channel, swiftly draining the water north to the Arctic. Willie, dazed and addled, was swept along, far away from all that was familiar. At 32 inches long, Willie was always bigger than his 253,186 siblings but suddenly he felt like a ravenous teen again. What did that rock do to Willie?

No longer satisfied with perch, he needed pike to dim his hunger. Year by year Willie grew as the lake shrunk. Millennia passed and people came to live on the shores and fish the waters of what is now Lake of the Woods. Willie did his best to hide in the depths where no normal walleye lingered. It was a lonely life and even sturgeon darted from him since he was known to snack on the occasional leviathan.

One glorious spring, the water was running high and the ice cover was breaking, as was Willie's heart. Finally, 9591 years after the great bang, he yearned to spawn. The urge got him dashing up the Rainy River, dodging logs, docks and a flotilla of fisherfolk. "What was that?" they cried. "Call the DNR. Check the record books!"

Willie took a hard right past a railroad bridge and around ferries when he abruptly got stuck in the muck between the halves of Baudette. Silly Willie, too eager perhaps!

Young Gary, out fishing the bay, watched the fisheries dudes stretch their mighty nets across the bay bridge to corral Willie upstream. Gary, and oodles of oglers, lingered on the shore for days as Willie tried to escape and the pros planned his fate. Willie, battered from the ordeal, was losing weight fast. Gary spent his every cent to buy treats which Willie gratefully slurped from the lad's tiny hand.

After much deliberation, the powers that be decided to transport Willie by train to the great Capitol University for further study and admiration. Willie panicked as the nets pulled tighter to scoop him up. Gary raced to the top of the bridge, raised his arms high and yelled, "Jump Willie, jump!"

The fish paused and considered, "Why didn't I think of that?" So jump he did. Alas, Willie, being no salmon, landed on the nearby hillside. Uff da! Serious bummer. Townsfolk approached to stroke his sleek sides while Willie gilled his last. "Fish fry?" the mayor suggested.

"No, no!" shrieked Gary as he ran to beg his father, Arnold, for help. Arnold gave impassioned speeches to civic and commerce groups to memorialize Willie. Then, before the inevitable aroma became unbearable, Willie was raised high in an armor of fiberglass and concrete at the very spot he landed. Now, at 480 inches and 5,000 pounds, he remains a mighty fine walleye.