

# REMEMBERING WILLIE WALLEYE

*by Rachel Krohn*

About 50 years ago, Willie Walleye was more than a legend. He was a leader, a friend, and everyone knew who he was. He was never to be caught. Willie was 127 years old and as a wise old fish he gave advice to those who came to him in his cove just off Pine Island.

Then one day, just past the weekend of opener, a tourist came from southern Michigan hearing of the wonderful fishing. Being new to the area he did not know of Willie and the hero he was to the area. He accidentally overheard two locals talking of Willie and the big fish that he was. The tourist smelled a challenge.

He headed to Willie's cove and started to call his name, just as he heard the others tell to do. As Willie came to the surface, the tourist speared him and pulled the monster into the boat. He was amazed at Willie's size and gleaming scales, but in his pride he could not throw Willie back. He started to drive his boat back to shore and all of a sudden, Willie talked to him. He asked, "What are you doing? Why are you taking me from my home?" (though secretly Willie had been planning to be caught as he knew his life was drawing to a close). The fisherman was so amazed that he just had to stop the boat. The two sat and talked for four hours and Willie told him of his life and his plans for the community.

The tourist agreed to help Willie with his plan and hid him in his tool box in the back of his truck; he stayed at the resort with Willie that night. Then the news broke out that Willie was gone. Nobody could figure out where he was. Many people traveled out to the cove and called his name, but no one could figure out where he went.

In the meantime, the tourist was working on the plans while holding the secret of Willie. After three weeks of panic, the tourist called a community meeting claiming that he could explain everything.

After the people gathered on the hill, the tourist stood at the bottom near the dock and revealed the blueprint. It was a drawing of Willie, but in statue form. The people were very confused until the tourist told his story and about Willie's wish to be a statue so that everyone could remember him.

Construction was to start immediately on the hill they were all seated on. The community was very sad that Willie was actually gone, but spirits were lifted when the plans were revealed. Everyone planned to pitch in and help. In the time span of twelve days, Willie was completed, but there was still an issue. How were the people to remember him? That brought the idea of Willie Walleye Day, celebrated the same weekend the statue was finished – so that everyone will remember him.