

# WILLIE

*by Dan Hoskins*

A Walleye family that lived in the Rainy River had a young son named Willie. Willie loved to swim with his mom and dad and one more thing about Willie, he loved to eat. Willie would eat everything in his sight.

Now in the town of Baudette, there was a little girl named Taylor and she loved to help her mom, Tina, around the house. But, she really loved to fish with her daddy, Tim. Taylor had a secret. Every other day Taylor would make three peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and she would go down to the river's edge and have a picnic with her mysterious fish friend.

That's right. Willie and Taylor had become such good friends. Taylor would smack the water and Willie would come swimming as fast as he could. Taylor would talk to Willie and Willie would smack his tail on the water in excitement. Then Taylor would share her sandwiches with Willie, of course. Willie would get two sandwiches and Taylor would eat one. And those peanut butter and jelly sandwiches made Willie grow and grow.

One day Tim and Taylor went for a nice afternoon of fishing. Now Taylor and Willie had a signal and when Taylor would clap her hands in the water, this meant for Willie to stay hidden so no one would find out about Willie.

Well, as Tim was getting things ready for the trip up river home, Taylor stood up to put away her fishing rod and she lost her balance. She fell overboard and when she hit the water she made a loud smack, and then disappeared. Her daddy Tim was frantic! Jumping overboard, he looked and looked for Taylor, but he couldn't find her, so he quickly headed back home to get more help.

When Tim's boat hit the shore, he jumped out of the boat and started up the stairs to the yard when all of a sudden he heard this loud splash. He spun around and there was this giant Walleye that had beached himself on the shoreline. Tim looked a little closer and he could see a small shoe out of the corner of the big fish's mouth. Tim rushed down to the fish and Willie opened his mouth wide and there was Taylor.

Tim quickly grabbed her and pushed the water out of her and she began to cough and cough then she said, "Daddy, Willie saved me." Tim said "Baby girl, I know that." Taylor said "Daddy, we have to hurry and get Willie back in the water." So Taylor and her daddy pushed Willie back into the water.

In honor of Willie saving the life of Taylor, Tim had a life-sized statue put up in downtown Baudette in honor of Willie for everyone that visits Baudette to see. And to this day, if you see a big wave in the middle of Rainy River, old Willie is probably patrolling the waters looking for food ... probably in search of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.