

Felix the Muskie

The Manitowish Waters chain of lakes had an unusual "celebrity" that was not a person. It was a fish! The fish was called Felix and its haunt was the bay of Little Star Lake that faced the road to Alder Lake just past its intersection with Powell Road where Jens and Lenore Larson had a little barn where Mrs. Larson milked a couple cows whose milk she sold to regular customers, each cow of them she called simply Bossie with a twist of the name that she pronounced "Baaah-see!" The enterprising couple had an unroofed iceshouse where they kept and sold ice that June put up in winter when he could not do his regular work, guiding fishermen.

In addition they had a bait business, selling minnows and suckers--suckers were the preferred bait for catching muskies at the time.

That time was the late 1930s or early 1940s. The Larsons happened to see that a muskie often appeared off their dock and realized that he would appear regularly about the same time. People were fascinated by the notion of a self-trained muskie and they began visiting the bait stand and buying a sucker to toss to the fish, and their reward was always a violent swirl as Felix shot around to snatch the sucker. Felix even had his picture in the Chicago paper!

The muskie's unique career lasted for more than one summer but ended abruptly when some not-very-sportsmanlike fisherman caught their beloved muskie. They had a suspicion who had done the villainous deed--even I as a little kid had heard who the suspect was--but never had a way to follow it up.

It turned out, too, that Felix should have been named Felicia! At the time the town was still maintaining the fish hatchery near the dam or the Conservation Department was, and in season the employees would net muskies to milk them for the eggs or sperm and then release them. And Felix showed up in their net and surrendered...eggs!

Felix was a female! And possibly the mother of little Felixes or Felicias but never so engaging as their mother was whom we thought was a father.

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