

April 27, 1988.

Keeping our waters safe

By JOHN WRIGHT
Sun Times staff

Some years ago, the OPP launch H. H. Graham encountered a solo windsurfer halfway between Tobermory and Manitoulin Island.

His clothes and money were wrapped in a plastic bag lashed to the top of the board. He wore no anti-cold gear such as a dry suit.

"I told him he'd better get aboard and he refused," OPP Const. Art King said recently. "When I then ordered him to get into our boat, well, he became downright indignant."

King said police discovered he was trying to sail to Killarney on the north shore of Georgian Bay and had told no one of his plans.

That encounter of a few years ago is just one of the many stories Constables King and Bill Pearson tell of their patrols in Lake Huron and Georgian Bay.

They were off Lion's Head last week when that story surfaced from the King storehouse of memories and memorabilia.

"I don't think he realized the life expectancy in these waters," King said, referring to the cold temperatures.

At that moment, he was navigating through broken ice pans, the last ice of winter heading out to its final graveyard in the open waters. A measurement just minutes before had revealed surface temperatures of just a tad above freezing.

The occasion was the voyage of the 9.9-metre OPP launch from Tobermory to Owen Sound, "the earliest we've ever had the vessel operational on the lakes", said Const. Bill Pearson who is not called a captain but is referred to as Officer in Charge of Launch 2 H. H. Graham.

Oddly, fishing is the reason the Graham is out early from her winter berth at the tip of the Bruce Peninsula and on station in southern Georgian Bay waters.

Pearson said the earlier opening of the Georgian Triangle spring trout derby, its extension from two weeks to a month, and the expectation of a high number of boaters prompted headquarters to bring the boat out early.

Bristling with electronic equipment such as radar, underwater sonar and radios, it will be the Graham's job to watch over the flock of small boaters during the derby to make sure fishermen enjoy their recreational pursuit safely.

Though she will be on station to rescue any boater in an emergency, Pearson explained their main job is to enforce the laws of Ontario and Canada.

"We're police officers first and marine officers second," he explained.

Over the rest of the boating season from Grand Bend to Thornbury, they will check boats for any infractions of The Canada Shipping

Act, small vessel regulations, the Criminal Code, provincial statutes such as the Liquor Licence Act and any environmental laws.

Right off, Pearson said boaters better know that the Graham and other OPP vessels have Alert machines and will be pulling boaters over and administering tests for sobriety if they suspect the operator is under the influence.

"Most fatalities we have with

• See OPP on page 4.

Vol 19 Pg 52