

# The 'General Williams' patrols Georgian Bay daily

**By Terri Howell**  
**MIDLAND**—Did you ever wonder why Midland's OPP officers keep their hair so short? If you were whizzing along on Georgian Bay on the open deck of a 36-foot launch doing close to 40 miles per hour trying to hail a passing speedboat, you'd want short hair too. While the majority of Midland's OPP officers are cruising the highways looking for infractions of the Criminal Code and Highway Traffic Act, most days police con-

stantables Greg Chinn and Dave Brophy are gliding along the crystal clear waters of Georgian Bay on the General Williams watching for infractions of the Small Vessels Act and the Criminal Code. It sounds like a nice way to spend the working hours of the day. However, according to Constable Brophy it takes a great deal of tact and diplomacy to deal with people on holidays since no one wants a ticket because they forgot to bring a life jacket along.

The General Williams is one of two police boats used by Midland's OPP detachment. The other boat, a smaller one, is used to run the rivers and manoeuvre into places the 36-foot General Williams could never reach. In the words of Greg Chinn "The 'General' is the 'showboat'. It is powered by twin 330 horsepower Chrysler marine engines." During the summer months big "General" is out patrolling the waters

of Georgian Bay daily. According to Constable Brophy the boat covers an area stretching as far as Twelve-Mile Bay north of Honey Harbour and meets another detachment's boat halfway between Midland and Wasaga Beach in Notawasaga Bay. The boat received its name from V.A.S. Williams who was the Commissioner of Police for Ontario from May 1, 1922 to September 1, 1939. It was launched at Killarney after being built there by the L.R. Lowe Boat Builders in 1967. Constable Brophy explained it was built for the Ontario police. Before it came to Midland it was used in security patrols at the 1976 Olympic yacht races at Kingston and escorted the Royal Britannia from Montreal to Kingston that same year.

The General Williams and her crew perform a varied task on their daily rounds. Since there is no road access to many of the cottages and homes in the 30,000 Islands, the boat cruises by them at least once a week. "If the people want us for anything they just have to wave us down," Constable Brophy says. He added they check for cottages that have been broken into as they pass.

If the General Williams doesn't make the rounds at least once a week thieves on the mainland or in the area might take the opportunity to strike, the police officers explained. When there are break-ins the OPP station in Midland is notified. The message is given to the General Williams by radio or handed to the police officers before they leave the dock. Each complaint is investigated. Both Constable Chinn and Constable Brophy say they have seen some pretty nice summer homes while investigating break-ins and accidents. The officers do more than just investigate complaints. Constable Brophy perches himself on a revolving chair in the centre of General Williams' cabin floor with a pair of binoculars. Although he gets teased about looking for bathing beauties, he is actually checking for registration numbers on passing boats with engines over 10 horsepower. Not everyone without a registration is charged even though as Constable Brophy says, "There is no excuse, since registration is free." In a lot of cases the boat operator is given time to obtain a registration. However, if

the officers pass the boat again, the driver will be charged. As the General Williams cruises the islands, boats are also randomly selected for safety checks. Those that are pulled over are asked whether there is a life jacket for each person in the craft, a bailing device and oars or paddles. People without the mandatory equipment can be charged. However, the officers say they "play it by ear." In a lot of cases Americans visiting Canada are pulled over and are unaware of Canadian laws. People are often given a warning before they are charged. Suspicious boats are also investigated. Constables Brophy and Chinn sighted a boat last week that appeared to be empty and adrift. Using depth finder apparatus they manoeuvred into it only to discover a young couple spread out in the bottom of the boat sunbathing. The General Williams is well equipped to deal with almost any situation. Four different radios keep the police officers in

touch with the Midland detachment office, the Citizen Band emergency channel and the coast guard. One depth finder tells them how many feet of water they are travelling in allowing them to get as close as they can to people or boats in trouble. A second depth finder gauge actually draws a pattern of the bottom of the lake or channel which they are travelling over helping them to spot high spots or in the case of a drowning, a body. Two weeks ago the General Williams was

called to a boating accident north of Honey Harbour near Cognashene. Two injured people were transported back to Midland in the boat. One used the bed in the cabin, according to Mr. Brophy, and the other one was set on the deck on a stretcher for the return trip. For the General Williams it was all in a days work. Most days the boat patrols near Beausoleil Island and Honey Harbour into the 30,000 Islands. It attends regattas and boating events to patrol and help

out. On the average day it travels about 40 - 45 miles on its regular route and investigating complaints, according to Mr. Brophy. Constables Brophy and Chinn aren't the only police officers who operate the General Williams. Other police officers are trained to drive and operate the equipment. Officers Brophy and Chinn claim their day is as busy as it would be if they were out in a patrol car on the roads. After seeing them in action, most would agree they're right.



Checking

David Brophy peers over the edge of the General Williams into a small aluminum boat on a routine check for life jackets, oars or paddles and a bailing device. The General Williams patrols the waters of Georgian Bay daily, investigating complaints and checking to make sure the rules of waterways are being obeyed.

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