

Handicapped Kids Gain From Mountie's Loss

by Al Porter

Camp Massawippi, a summer camp for disabled children in the Montreal area, has acquired a lot of equipment as a result of Constable Mike Fletcher's weight loss. Fletcher, 33, has been a member of the Force for the past 14 years and works in the Passport and Immigration section in Montreal.

In March, 1986, Fletcher weighed 336 lb. Fletcher was then international president of the Blue Knights Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club. Roger Mailhiot, who was then club vice-president, and a New Hampshire state trooper, challenged Fletcher to lose weight. Mailhiot offered an incentive. He and members of the Blue Knights' Northeast Conference pledged a dollar for each pound Fletcher could lose. The money was to be given to a charity of Fletcher's choice. This challenge was duplicated from chapters throughout the Blue Knights organization; Fletcher joined Weight Watchers and set out on his quest.

By September, 1986, Fletcher had lost 125 lb. The Blue Knights paid off their obligations, and this money, along with other monies collected by Fletcher, netted almost \$5,000 for the kids.

Last spring, Fletcher and members of the Montreal Blue Knights went to Camp Massawippi; however, they didn't go empty handed. A large truck and a trailer

were needed to carry the supplies for the camp. Four canoes, a row-boat, an electronic megaphone, two 10 x 12 ft. tents, 10 backpacks, nine large camp mattresses and safety equipment for the camp's beach were included in the haul.

Fletcher is unmarried and has adopted these kids in his heart. "I've learned from these kids," he says about his involvement with them. "After working with them for five years, there's nothing at home, or at work, that can get you down after you see what they go through every day, and keep smiling." He smiles, and his pride shows as he continues, "The kids' project for this year is to think of some way I can raise money for them next year."

Excess weight is not the only thing that Fletcher has given up for "Mike's kids", as they are known among the Blue Knights. Until 1984, Fletcher sported a beard. The beard was sacrificed at the Blue Knights annual convention in Brewer, Maine, that summer, and Mike's kids gained about \$3,000.

Since 1984, Fletcher's endeavours have raised almost \$12,000 for disabled kids at Camp Massawippi. ■

Al Porter is a Windsor, Ontario police constable who is awaiting retirement to disability pension. — Ed.