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Blast of summer

Riverfest veterans know how to get comfortable

BY TANYA BRICKING
The Cincinnati Enquirer

Chuck Withrow celebrated the eve of his 41st birthday in style.

From atop his 33-foot Coachmen motor home parked beside Cinergy Field, he kicked off his shoes Sunday and reclined in a lawn chair, enjoying the river view.

This is a Labor Day ritual for the Norwood dump truck driver. And the 20th anniversary of the fireworks at Riverfest suits him just fine.

"I just watch everybody go by," he said. "They look at me and say, 'Why didn't we do that this year?'"

For Mr. Withrow, the event began at 4 a.m. when he pulled in to park. He fixed scrambled eggs for breakfast and watched the crowd grow on the riverfront and surrounding hills.

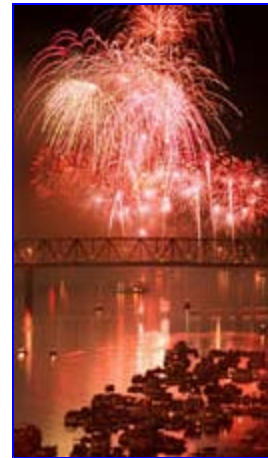
He said he had the best view of the fireworks and all the essentials: friends, cold beverages, burgers, a mini-TV and a boom box.

Thousands of others had the same idea as they dotted the riverfront - some decked out for the Bengals game, others in Riverfest T-shirts.



(Kevin J. Miyazaki photo)
| [ZOOM](#) |

liquor violations - seized about 200 containers of alcohol and about 10 coolers, fewer than last year. They also reported confiscating 41 grams of marijuana.



(Kevin J. Miyazaki photo)
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Up to half a million people crowded the riverfront for the annual fireworks extravaganza by Rozzi's, plus music, sand volleyball, Frisbee tossing and an air show. They brought blankets and cameras and walked through security guards checking for alcohol and other banned items.

By 9 p.m., Cincinnati police had issued 42 citations - mainly for

As evening approached, the crowds oohed and ahhed over the acrobatic flying of a stunt pilot.

Pete Arbic, 41, of Biloxi, Miss., came 800 miles to see the show with his two children from Norwood. They came early for front-row seats on Serpentine Wall.

"Rozzi's puts on the show like nobody else," he said. "I wouldn't miss it."

On the boats docked near the Brent Spence Bridge on Cincinnati's side, the festivities have lasted all week. The Metzler family, from Fairfield, docked their cruiser, Admar, on Tuesday next to new friends on a boat called Slightly Broke.

"We're river rats," said Nancy Metzler, 51, who calmed her dog, Chelsey, each time a fireworks shell boomed. "This is our vacation."

The day didn't end without a few scary moments on the river. On Sunday afternoon, a small pleasure boat began taking on water near Ludlow. Kenton County Water Rescue crews rescued several people as the boat sank, but everyone aboard, including a pregnant woman, was reported safe.



(Elisabeth Heimlich photo)

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After the fireworks, an unidentified young woman either fell or jumped from the Clay Wade Bailey Bridge, and was wedged in the superstructure. She was rescued about 11:15 p.m.

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