

# 365ink

MAGAZINE

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**BIG CHANGE  
COMING FOR...**

THE DUBUQUE JAYCEES / RADIO DUBUQUE

## **FIREWORKS & AIRSHOW ON THE RIVER**

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**Dubuque Jaycees / Radio Dubuque Fireworks and Air Show on the Mississippi Sunday, July 3**

by Mike Ironside  
Photos by Ron & Jennifer Tigges

**3** JULY The production of this issue of 365ink happens to fall smack dab on the first day of summer, at least in meteorological and calendar terms. Measured by various other signifiers like busting out the grill, mowing the lawn, going out on the river, or drinking beer under the Town Clock, summer is well underway. At any rate, there's nothing like Independence Day celebrations to truly capture the spirit of summertime in America and as June draws to a close we know that essential summer holiday can't be far behind.

Here in Dubuque, we celebrate Independence Day in a big way, starting early to make the most of it. In fact, the Golden Knights Parachute Team will be making a precision jump demonstration in the Kennedy Mall parking lot as early as Saturday, July 2. (See more about that in the accompanying article.) But undoubtedly the principal event in Tri-State Independence Day celebrations for more than a quarter-century is the Radio Dubuque / Dubuque Jaycees Fireworks on the riverfront near Lock and Dam 11, traditionally held on July 3.

This year holds a few changes in store for the well-established tradition. Big Changes. Radio Dubuque organizers will be moving their center of operations from the parking lot of Bowling & Beyond to a location closer to the river.

"We're going to move down to the Hawthorne Boat Ramp. The A.Y. McDonald Park / Hawthorne Boat Ramp will be our center. That's the only change that's really happening," explained organizer and Radio Dubuque General Sales Manager Perry Mason. "The Golden Knights will jump down there also. One of the main reasons for (the change) is communications with the aircraft. The air show is getting bigger and bigger and we need to maintain aircraft communications at all times."

Mason explained that in the previous location, direct radio contact is difficult because the proximity of the bluffs, especially those at Eagle Point Park blocks transmission. "It's pretty difficult until they're right on top of us," noted Mason. "In the past we've had to do a relay through the Dubuque (Airport) tower, either by cell phone or radio back and forth until we could maintain a line of sight. So being able to move a little bit farther south and a little bit farther east, because of the way the River flows, we have a better line of sight north and south."

Because of logistics and safety issues, vehicles – including those hauling boat trailers – will not be allowed into A.Y. McDonald Park after Saturday night of the Independence



Day weekend. Likewise, the Hawthorne Boat Ramp will not be accessible on Sunday. Boaters wishing to launch boats on the River on Sunday will be diverted to the 16th Street Boat Ramp or the East Dubuque ramp, both of which will be open.

"We're going to have to have patience, we're going to have to have the cooperation of boaters," Mason explained. "We've already been receiving calls. Somebody has already gone down to the police station; they've been upset. I got a call last night, somebody was really upset; but after I've explained to them what's going on they've been more understanding."

Despite the change for organizers, very little will change for spectators at the event. A.Y. McDonald Park, though closed to vehicles will be open to pedestrians. "It will basically be open to foot traffic," said Mason. "We want people to come down there, they're

just going to have to walk a little bit more. Fireworks are the same spot. The Air Show is at the same spot. Really, what's changing is our broadcast site."

As in the past, Bowling & Beyond will open their parking lot to spectators on foot so if that area is your usual vantage point, grab the lawn chairs and head down early for a good spot. You might consider bringing a portable radio if you want to sit in that area and hear the Radio Dubuque simulcast.

Likewise, all the usual parking offered by the Dubuque Jaycees will still be available. Those who traditionally "tailgate" and watch from the parking areas will be able to do so and those wishing to be right under the action can walk to Bowling & Beyond's parking lot or to A.Y. McDonald Park via the Shiras Avenue extension. "There are going to be some people who always go down to the Hawthorne Boat Ramp or the park and their plans are going to be a little bit different this year," said Mason.

While the change is not huge, the number of people who annually view the Fireworks and Air Show is. Though Dubuque is known for hosting some big parties in the forms of festivals throughout the summer, the July 3 Fireworks annually draws thousands of people to the river, A.Y. McDonald Park, floodwall, and immediate surrounding area, with thousands more viewing from various locations along the bluffs on both sides of the river. Although it's difficult to quantify, organizers and military pilots flying overhead now estimate that over a quarter-million people watch the spectacle!

With that many people watching, Radio Dubuque (made up of stations KAT-FM, KDTH, 97.3 The Rock, and 101.1 The River) and the Dubuque Jaycees step up every year and create one of the best fireworks displays in the Midwest. When combined with air show, which precedes it, and the radio simulcast of patriotic songs during the fireworks show itself, the event is truly one of the premier Independence Day celebrations in the country.

"It's been touted as one of the top ten in the country when you combine the fireworks and air show," noted Mason. "We put into our air show in a two-hour period or two-and-a-half-hour period what major air shows around the country spread out over an entire day. The big thing is this is free. You know the military tells us that there are over 250,000 people that watch it from all three states. That's not me saying it. That's their numbers."





This year's Air Show promises to be another great one. Mason reports that in addition to the parachute jump by the Golden Knights, the show will open with a B-1 Bomber and



will also feature a P-51 Mustang, and the return of the daredevil wing-walking of Dave Dacy and Tony Kazian.



New to this year's Air Show will be an ARC Racing demonstration (Aerobatic Racing Challenge). Some might have seen the relatively new sport on TV, which features two high-performance aircraft performing a series of choreographed aerobatic maneuvers between the far points of the "race course."



The Air Show gets started about 5:45 p.m. and will go until about 8:30 p.m. As the fireworks don't start until after it gets dark, (about 9:45 p.m.) the wait in between requires some patience, or at least a well-stocked cooler.

Actually, to best enjoy the celebration, patience is not only a virtue but truly the best way to go. If you're planning to watch the show from A.Y. McDonald Park, the Bowling & Beyond parking lot, or any of the surrounding area (and why wouldn't you – you're right under the planes as they fly over, and the fireworks!) go early and leave yourself plenty of time to get there. There are plenty of great spots from which to watch if you get down there early. Bring your lawn chairs and cooler and be sure you have plenty of gas in the car. Even on the way there, you might be sitting in traffic for a bit. Just relax and listen to the radio, it won't be that long. People in Chicago do this to and from work every day. You can survive it one day out of the year!

We also suggest you use the Jaycees parking areas. Considering how many cars they park in the area it all goes quite smoothly and your \$10 donation to the Jaycees goes back to funding next year's fireworks. Don't waste everyone's time trying to negotiate for a special spot, etc. just relax and go with the flow. And be nice. The folks in the orange vests are volunteers, so work with them.

Speaking of being nice and working with the volunteers, keep in mind that you are there to celebrate America with thousands of other Americans. Be nice to your neighbors for the evening whether you camp in the parking area for the show or find a spot in the parking lot. You should also deposit any trash you might create in appropriate receptacles or take it with you. Seriously, being rude and leaving garbage behind is no way to show your national pride. (See our special 365 Tips article for more ideas how best to enjoy the fireworks.)

And finally, as long as it takes everyone to get there, parked, and prepared for the show, it takes nearly as long for the whole process in reverse. Again, patience young Jedi. We're always amazed by the people who race to their cars, only to sit in lines of traffic. This is not the Grand Prix. The way we look at it, you've got a lawn chair, you've got a cooler, it's a beautiful summer Saturday night by the river ... what the heck are you late for again?



## Golden Knights Parachute Team Jump

Saturday, July 2  
Kennedy Mall Parking Lot

**2** JULY The Golden Knights Parachute Team, longtime participants in the Radio Dubuque / Dubuque Jaycees Fireworks and Air Show, will make an appearance in the form of a precision jump the day before the big celebration. Sponsored by

Richardson Motors and Dubuque Mining Company on Saturday, July 2, the Golden Knights will make a jump at 7 p.m. landing in the Kennedy Mall parking lot just off Stoneman Road.

For over fifty-two years, members of the U. S. Army Parachute Team have been marking the milestones of achievement and an evolution of excellence serving as "ambassadors" of the Army's only official demonstration team. The Golden Knights portray the image of being the most formidable parachuting competitors and demonstrators in the world today.

Sponsors and organizers of the event invite everyone to join them for this exiting opportunity to view the Golden Knights. To show appreciation for the jumpers and pilots Richardson Motors invites attendees to pick up a flag at the site or in advance at the dealership. All donations for the flags will benefit Honor Flight of Dubuque. The first 200 beverages sold will be complimented with a free koozie.

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