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Excuse me: Could you quiet the hog?

My wife and I went to Ray's Seafood & Lobster on Ocean Boulevard in Rye to celebrate our second wedding anniversary this past Monday.

We were fortunate to get the corner table facing the ocean, and a cool breeze was an anniversary gift from the oppressive inland heat. Enjoying a locally brewed Shoals Pale Ale, I looked out over the high tide shining beneath a setting sun and listened as each wave crashed ashore.

"Maureen," I said, "I want you to know how much I -- So, happy anniversary; I--"

"What," she shouted.

"I said, I -- you!"

"I can't hear -- !"

Damn.

Six motorcyclists revved away my moment while warming up their engines before tearing off up Ocean Boulevard to something far less romantic than the pursuit in the film classic "Easy Rider." A young boy, about 7, sitting at adjacent table covered his ears in apparent pained horror.

Motorcycle noise ... the summer scourge.

While I wouldn't openly fantasize about the end of "Easy Rider" and demise of the relative innocents, Wyatt (aka Captain America) and Billy, I can't help but wish police could do more to enforce the law regarding motorcycle noise.

I must add I am a little more distraught over motorcycle noise whereas it's not the 1960s and the height of the dangerous antagonism of the Hells Angels counterculture. No, today's roaring cyclists are often middle-aged men and women in shiny, buffed leather pants atop \$20,000 "hogs" and whose day jobs include accounting, stock trading and real estate.

I imagine these rebellious "scofflaws" might be apt to call the police on me if I cranked up my favorite Nirvana song loud enough to rattle their glasses of lemonade off their veranda.

But I digress. Area police departments have stepped up their efforts, so please don't blame them. Unfortunately, our police are left to plead with motorcyclists to show some restraint rather than give them a meaningful ticket or even impound their bike.

Police from Greenland, Hampton, New Castle, Portsmouth, Rye and Seabrook, along with the state Highway Department of Safety Enforcement, will conduct a motorcycle noise checkpoint this Saturday, July 29, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. They've held checkpoints June 24 and July 8 -- one in Hampton, the other on the Portsmouth/Rye town line.

Portsmouth Police Chief Mike Magnant answers too many calls from pesky journalists like myself who want to know why more motorcyclists are not ticketed for excessive noise.

"I guess they were successful," Magnant said about the two previous checkpoints. "Here's the issue -- loud motorcycles and loud exhausts for the most part are an epidemic."

It's not unique to Portsmouth, the Seacoast or state, Magnant said. It's nationwide.

"To think we alone, the Portsmouth Police Department, is going to be able to make a severe dent in this problem without some kind of education and individual compliance. ... It's going to be next to impossible."

The challenge isn't confronting rogue gangs of Hells Angels. It's fighting suit-and-tie lobbyists funded in large part by the automotive aftermarket manufacturers industry.

"They've been very a strong lobbying group throughout the nation," Magnant said.

Part of the lobbying effort is to make sure any law actually passed is utterly unenforceable when it comes down to doing so.

"You end up with a law that says a motorcycle has to be at 106 decibels at 2800 RPMs," Magnant said of the current N.H. law. "If it meets that standard, it passes, but it can be over that standard. That's the problem."

Essentially, for example, a motorcycle measuring at, say 110 decibels at 3200 RPMs, is legal. Nice work on behalf of our lawmakers.

And Magnant says the requirements to conduct field tests on the bikes are also practically impossible to consistently meet.

The law requires the decibel meter to be certified and meet specific engineering standards. Then it has to be held at a specific distance from the exhaust pipe, at a specific angle, while the bike is revved to a specific RPM level. It takes two officers to conduct the test. Unless, of course, the bike is one of the newer ones that come without tachometers. In that case, another piece of certified equipment must be used. This requires a third officer.

"It's asinine," Magnant said.

Believe it or not, there is more. Magnant recalled a few years back a local district court judge threw out several cases brought by the Portsmouth police, saying the department didn't do enough to forewarn motorcyclists. By that rationale, I guess we should make sure everyone in America knows they shouldn't shoot Captain America with a shotgun because they could get arrested and go to jail.

"We're in the process of putting up more signs and a giving out a brochure," Magnant said. "We're handing them out in (Market) Square, at the checkpoints and down (at) the local Harley garage."

Magnant said he believes the effort is making a difference.

"We have received some feedback from the public last few summers that it has been quieter," he said. "We've tried to do our best from an educational perspective. It's the "City

of the Open Door" -- everyone is welcome, but please keep down the noise."

For information on controlling bike noise, visit www.noiseoff.org/motorcycles.shtml.

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