

Rescinding license not the solution

As the result of a recent fracas which took place after closing hours at Joe's Twin Villa on Old Mill Road in Osterville, a Mashpee man was shot by the manager of the night club. He later died.

Once again neighbors of Joe's Twin Villa raise their voices to demand that the selectmen of the Town of Barnstable rescind the club's liquor license. Their complaints of disorderliness and excessive noise, particularly after closing hours, deserve attention and consideration.

No one can blame neighbors from objecting when their sleep is repeatedly being disturbed by noisy and unruly behavior in the wee small hours of the morning. None of us would be happy to find ourselves awakened by a raucous crowd, night after night. In summer months when our windows are open to catch cool breezes, sound carries in the still night air. Screams and curses are most assuredly not conducive to pleasant dreams.

On the other hand, the night club called Joe's Twin Villa has been operating as a "watering hole" longer than almost any other in town; certainly longer than any other in the village of Osterville. Ever since repeal of prohibition, Joe's has held a license (with, perhaps, the exception of the sason after its previous owner, Joseph V. Gomes, died). Joe's is almost an institution in the village.

The question is not so much whether the license to serve liquor should be rescinded as whether there is anything to be done to maintain peace. It would seem reasonable to expect that through the combined efforts of the night club's management and the Barnstable police, an orderly departure by patrons from Joe's might be effected.

Citizens, police officers, selectmen, state legislators, and all those engaged in operating bar rooms are aware of recent renewed efforts to curb drunken driving. We venture to guess that few if any of Joe's clientele leave there at closing time and walk home. Should departing clientele appear to be intoxicated, surely they should not be driving automobiles. This is a matter for police to determine.

And almost as surely, if departing clientele are not intoxicated, they leave in a quiet, peaceful, and dignified manner. No screams and curses shatter the still night when people are sober.

Joe's is not the only nightclub in Osterville of which neighbors, at times, complain. Similar grumblings have been expressed in the past about others, but their licenses were never pulled. And while there may never have been a hooting at the others, the person who fired the gun at Joe's was carrying it legally, has a clean record, and is yet to be convicted of any crime.

Before we respond to the tragedy at Joe's Twin Villa with condemnation, we might be wise to approach the problem of noise at closing hours as we would if it existed at any other night club in the Town of Barnstable. Maintenance of civil peace is a matter of law enforcement. Had citizens' reports of excessive noise been heeded by police, a life might have been saved.

Now is the time to ask for better cooperation among police, the night club's management, and its patrons. Joe's Twin Villa serves the same purpose that any other night club does. Closing Joe's will only move the problem to another location. Rather than shift the problem, why not solve it?