

Written by Michelle Hunter, The Times-Picayune
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The Rev. Grant Storms, the Christian fundamentalist known for his bullhorn protests of the Southern Decadence festival in the French Quarter, was arrested on a charge of masturbating at a Metairie park Friday afternoon.

Storms, 53, of 2304 Green Acres Road in Metairie, was taken into custody at Lafreniere Park after two women reported seeing him masturbating in the driver's seat of his van, which was parked near the carousel and playground, a Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office report said.

The first woman told deputies she was taking her children to the playground and parked next to the van at about noon. As she was walking around her own vehicle, she noticed the van windows were down and the occupant was "looking at the playground area that contained children playing, with his zipper down...," the report said. The woman noted that he was masturbating and quickly ushered her children out of her car.

She told a second woman, who walked to the van and also spotted the man masturbating, the report said. The second witness told deputies that the driver saw her and tried to conceal the zipper area of his pants with his hand.

The two women flagged down a park employee who notified the Sheriff's Office. The employee detained the man, later identified as Storms, until deputies arrived.

Storms told deputies he was having lunch at the park when he decided to urinate using a bottle instead of the restroom, the report said.

Deputies booked him with obscenity. Bond was set at \$5,000, but he was released from the Jefferson Parish Correctional Center in Gretna on Sunday because of jail crowding.

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Storms could not be reached for comment on Monday.

A self-styled "Christian patriot," Storms led a small West Bank congregation called The Reformer Church and for 10 years hosted "The Reformer Radio Show" on WSHO. Storms has railed against the Roman Catholic church, calling it "satanic" and "demonic."



He is especially known for arming followers with bullhorns, Bibles and picket signs to protest Southern Decadence, the three-day gay festival held in the French Quarter during Labor Day weekend. Storms grabbed national attention in 2003 with his failed attempts to shut down what Southern Decadence organizer Chuck Robinson called a peaceful festival that celebrates gay and alternative lifestyles.

"He's done everything through the years to disturb that and try to make it into something nasty that it's not," Robinson said. "If the Rev. Storms is caught doing that in our city, it is ludicrous and heinous that he would have the nerve to complain about any kind of sexuality."

The amplified antics of Storms and his followers prompted the New Orleans City Council to adopt ordinances banning the use of megaphones and other such devices in the French Quarter, though the law requires a certain decibel meter reading before it can be enforced.

Earl Bernhardt, co-owner of The Tropical Isles and two other Bourbon Street clubs, got a temporary restraining order against Storms during Southern Decadence 2004, then went bullhorn to bullhorn with him when that didn't work.

"He's, in my opinion, just repulsive," Bernhardt said Monday. "I'm not surprised at all that he got caught doing that. Serves him right. He'll be out of our hair down here."

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http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2011/02/man_booked_with_masturbating_a.html