



# The Rex Captain

02/01/2011 by [Sue Strachan \(https://www.myneworleans.com/author/sue-strachan/\)](https://www.myneworleans.com/author/sue-strachan/)





**MARYLOU UTTERMOHLEN PHOTOGRAPH**

THE REX CAPTAIN

Though he may seem mysterious, this masked man in many ways (like masked superheroes) brings good things to people. In this case, it's the Rex parade, a dazzling array of floats that roll bright and early on Mardi Gras day with its costumed riders dispensing beads and many more valuable trinkets to eager parade-goers.

The identity of this masked man? Sir Bathurst – the fancy, formal name for the captain of Rex. His real name is never revealed. As the captain, he ensures this parade and the Rex organization, also known as The School of Design, continues its tradition of entertaining Mardi Gras crowds since 1872.

After the 2010 parade, a new Sir Bathurst was chosen, making this one the 17th Captain in Rex history. To see his and the krewe's handiwork, well, you'll just have to be in New Orleans on March 8 – Mardi Gras – when you will be among the lucky ones to see the parade. This year's theme is "This Sceptered Isle," pulled from a quote from William Shakespeare's *Richard II*. I've gotten a sneak peek of the floats – designed by Henry Schindler with Manuel Ponce and Blaine Kern artists – as I interviewed the Captain at the Rex den, and this year is undoubtedly going to be outstanding. As for Sir Bathurst (no, I'm not going to tell you who he is), I will say Rex is definitely in good hands.

**Age:** 50 **Family:** Wife, son and daughter **Born and raised:** New Orleans **Education:** Received a JD from Tulane University **Favorite food:** Boiled crawfish **Favorite movie:** *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* **Favorite TV show:** The meeting of the Rex and Comus courts on channel 12. **Favorite restaurant:** The one on the closest corner to where I am. It's one of the things I love about New Orleans is that there are so many "corner" restaurants. **Favorite music/musician:** Dave Matthews Band **Favorite vacation:** Umbria, Italy **Hobby:** I love the outdoors – hunting, fishing, skiing.

**What is your first Mardi Gras memory?** Actually, my first Mardi Gras memory is watching Zulu and Rex passing by the Carol (apartments). I was 5 or so.

**What is your craziest Mardi Gras memory?** I can't say.

**How long has your family been involved in Rex?** For generations



**How long have you been part of Rex?** I've been a member since 1990.

**How did you find out that you were the new captain?** In a meeting, the former captain announced he was ready to retire and looked at me and said, "I recommend him." It was a wonderful surprise.

**What are your responsibilities as the Captain?** Basically, I'm the CEO of the Rex organization. We're blessed with a krewe full of volunteers, so it's more or less coordinating, making sure that people do their responsibilities at the appropriate times.

**What will be your routine on Mardi Gras day?** I will get up before the sun and try to put some food in me; pick up Rex, King of Carnival, then go to the Royal Run in Audubon Park, which the Queen of Carnival wins. After that, we head to the den, have breakfast, then get suited up.

**Will you be on a float or on a horse?** I will be riding a horse named Charles DeGaulle. I've been riding a horse since 1993.

**Is there something about the Rex organization that you would like people to know?** Rex is a group of community leaders from all different backgrounds who traditionally come together to help put on the greatest free show on earth [Mardi Gras], and more recently have banded together to create the Pro Bono Publico Foundation.

The concept was founded in the immediate wake of Hurricane Katrina, but officially it started 2007, because that's when the foundation formally received a 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation. Project Green was cleaning up the parade route – the idea was the city at the time could not afford the clean up. Project Gold was Rex members' purchased wristbands (like Lance Armstrong's "Live Strong"), which they threw to the crowd. The wristbands raised funds for the NOPD to help defray overtime. The idea behind Project Purple is that the krewe is filled with lawyers, doctors, businessmen and accountants; then (we) match them to the needs of the charter schools. Rex members gave thousands of hours of their time – pro bono – helping many of these charter schools get off the ground and continue to this day to serve. In Orleans Parish, there is a Rex member on almost every charter school board.

We discontinued the projects formally after the first year. The second year, we saw there was a great opportunity, and our focus became raising money for the charter schools – for the education of inner-city children. In 2009, we gave \$345,000 to those institutions, and we're trying to increase that to \$500,000 to give each and every year to educate inner-city youth. We do not give to private schools. We do give to two archdiocese schools, but they educate underserved students in the city.

**What is your favorite parade other than Rex?** Proteus. The artistry of Rex is reflected in Proteus at night. When you see (Proteus) rolling at night, it's beautiful.

**What is your favorite thing about Mardi Gras?** There is something for everybody at Mardi Gras. I think the rest of the world has Mardi Gras wrong. When I think of Mardi Gras, I think of the sights, sounds and smells of going down St. Charles Avenue and seeing multi-generational families from every socioeconomic background standing next to one other, coming together to celebrate a unique cultural activity that you can't find anywhere else to the extent New Orleans has it.

**If not in the Rex parade, where would you be on Mardi Gras day, and what costume would you be in?** Because my children are grown and out of the house, I think I probably would be around Jackson Avenue and St. Charles Avenue to watch all the parades. I'm a big believer in costumes. I would probably try to do some satirical theme of a current event that I thought was clever.

**True confession:** There is no evidence of Mardi Gras in our house at all.

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