



CRIME

# Florida deacon sexually assaulted young girl by luring her into his tree house: police

Thomas Warren Halsey, 65, of Leesburg is charged with two counts of sexual battery. Police said he inappropriately touched the girl and exposed himself inside the tree house in his backyard.

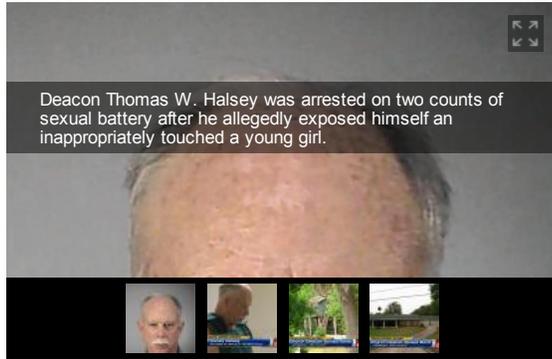
BY JOEL LANDAU / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Sunday, March 30, 2014, 11:55 AM

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Deacon Thomas W. Halsey was arrested on two counts of sexual battery after he allegedly exposed himself an inappropriately touched a young girl.

LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

A Florida minister used a tree house at his home to sexually abuse a young girl, police said.

Deacon Thomas Warren Halsey, 65, was arrested for allegedly sexually battering a girl under the age of 10 on his Leesburg property, [reports the Orlando Sentinel](#).

The deacon turned himself in to police on Friday. He is being held at Lake County jail on no bail and is charged with two

counts of sexual battery on a child under the age of 12, [according to the jail](#).

The victim told police the deacon told her to touch him inappropriately in the tree house and also in his bed. He also exposed himself to the girl in the tree house, the newspaper reports.

“It's kind of reminiscent of the plain white van with the puppy inside.”

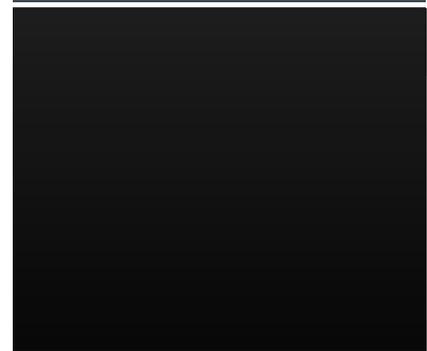
She told police the incident was "creepy" and declined to discuss it in more detail, the newspaper reported.

The suspect told police the girl touched him inappropriately and said she would run away if he did not take his clothes off. He claimed to inform the girl's mother what happened, but she denied that he did.

Investigators told [TV station WKMG](#) that Halsey used the tree house as a "lure" for his victim, whom he assaulted for about two years.

"It's kind of reminiscent of the plain white van with the puppy inside," [Sgt. James Vachon told the station](#).

## CRIMEVIDEO



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Halsey is now being removed as a deacon with the First Baptist Church of Leesburg, the newspaper reported.

"We're surprised, but again he's being accused," [Art Ayris, the church's executive pastor told the Sentinel](#). "We're going to let the legal system work it out. We're going to support his wife and help her out."

[jlandau@nydailynews.com](#) Follow on Twitter @joelzlandau

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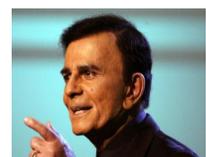
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The family of iconic DJ Casey Kasem gathered



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It wouldn't be the "Real Housewives of New York" without including some family drama.

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JESSICA K

67 days ago

3

65 year old with a tree house? What a giant perv. Off with his head and loins.

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WISE ONE

67 days ago

1

I wonder if the clergy perp rate is higher than the general population. This guy should be c@astr@ted, and then thrown in prison. Seriously, why don't we cut child sex offenders?

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GEO WASH

65 days ago

0

fear not, the people who least like this, will fix this. (black inmates) unless his all white jury gives him the DuPont treatment...

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CHRISTOPHER DARCY

66 days ago

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Leesburg is in the middle of hillbilly florida

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NYCERIEMAN1

66 days ago

0

There is a special place in He77 for this kind of creep there is no earthly;y punishment that compares to what is in store for him.

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NYCERIEMAN1

66 days ago

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All members of the clergy that have contact with children should have clearances form the state just as are required for teachers. It is no guarantee but it will help.

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NIKBROLLIN

66 days ago

0

so the wife didnt think anything of the tree house?

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**SKIPPER SAM**

66 days ago

0

Wow

How fast was this creep to blame the girl ?

65 with a tree house ?

The girl should receive the property

The wife receives no sympathy from me again unless its for their grandkids why do they have a tree house ?

Like [REPLY](#)

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**PADRAIC PEARSE**

66 days ago

0

Horrible. Cut his junk off and send him to jail.

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**DANIEL CHRISTOPHER**

67 days ago

0

The old "Come up and see what's in my treehouse" trick, huh ? I think Secret Agent #86 Maxwell Smart fell for that one too.

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**J. Lo performs at free Bronx concert**

For the multi-media star's maiden performance on her original turf, J. Lo appeared at Orchard Beach in Pelham Bay Park.



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From body painting in London to heart-shaped



**Rape, sodomy charges against teacher stand**

A Utah judge refused to dismiss rape and sodomy charges Tuesday against a former high school English



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- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18 or older

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