

Convict can't change his name, court rules

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Convicted killer Ralph Parker Verrill may be getting out of jail someday and when he does he wants to leave behind his name. But the state Appeals Court yesterday said not so fast.

The court ruled that granting Verrill's request to change his name to Jerry Irish Murphy could confuse law enforcement and parole officials who would be using criminal and other records based on his given name.

In a way, it could be providing a seal of legality on something that crooks develop as an expertise in their chosen vocations: evading the law through a twisted path of aliases.

For Verrill, the name change petition to Probate and Family Court was an attempt to legalize a name that his friends called him when he was younger.

Verrill, 60, convicted of murder and kidnapping, said people called him Jerry Irish Murphy until he was 12 years old. He said he'd like his name to reflect his Roman Catholic heritage.

But the court, in rejecting the re-

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quest, said the name change could "cause significant confusion in the criminal justice system." Reams of records could be compromised and police could not rely on his given name as a "useful investigatory tool," the justices wrote.

For now, Verrill remains in the Bay State Correctional Center in Norfolk, still named Verrill. But, the justices assured him in summary, he may take solace in the fact that — a legal name change notwithstanding — he can call himself whatever he wants "provided there is no fraudulent intent."