

When You Wish to Be an R

OR, SOME REQUESTS ARE TOO EXTREME

WITH APOLOGIES TO NED WASHINGTON, LEIGH HARLINE AND, OF COURSE, JIMINY CRICKET

Robert Rains

A COMMENT ON *In re: Change of Name of Mary Ravitch*, 754 A.2d 1287 (Pa. Super. 2000), in which the Pennsylvania Superior Court upheld the trial court's refusal to allow Mary to change her last name to the "nice and simple" letter "R." With perhaps a touch of hyperbole, the trial court opined that, "Our society's ... concept of law and order would dissipate into chaos and confusion," if Mary's unopposed petition were to be

granted. Characterizing the proposed name change as "bizarre," the Superior Court noted that, "if courts were to permit initialized official names as a matter of course, we would invite surname replication at an exponential rate, greatly in excess of what is currently experienced with common surnames, so as to make informal identification burdensome at best." Moral: it's better to have 10,000 Mary Smiths than one Mary R.

*Mary Ravitch went to court
To have her name cut very short.
When you wish to be an "R"
Dreams don't come true.*

*The judge she tried hard to convince,
She'd be like the artist formerly known as Prince,
Except she wished to be an "R"
As dreamers do.*

Robert E. Rains is a professor at the Dickinson School of Law of the Pennsylvania State University. He denies reports that he is reverting to his childhood.

*Fate unkind
Denied her what she'd love –
The sweet fulfillment of
Initial longing.*

*Like a bolt out of the blue,
Courts responded, "No can do –
'Cause the letter of the law
Is not for you."*

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