

NICKNAME TOSSED OUT IN RETRIAL OF A MAN CALLED NITTI

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The prosecution must leave the colorful nicknames at home in the murder retrial of **Frank** (**Frank Nitti**) **Usher** , Recorder's Court Judge David Kerwin ruled Monday.

The new trial for **Usher** , whose earlier conviction in a drug-related 1979 triple beheading was overturned, begins today.

Kerwin acted on a motion from defense lawyer Steve Fishman, who said it was necessary "to keep from the jury the notorious nickname of **Frank** Nitti," a real-life associate of Al (Scarface) Capone.

The legend of Nitti, known as "The Enforcer," has endured thanks to television and movie versions of "The Untouchables."

As for criminal nicknames in general, Kerwin said, "Some prosecutors and reporters just love those names that fit inside the parentheses."

Fishman said nicknames are often hung on unwilling recipients. "You get stuck with them," he said. "It's not like you go out and choose them."

The triple beheading case was especially awash in monikers.

In addition to **Usher** , those charged included Adolph (Doc Holiday) Powell, James (Red) Freeman, Robert (Lefty) Partee and Benjamin (Shorty) Fountain.

Detroit is a town where criminals have often sported memorable nicknames. Among recent ones are Richard (Maserati Rick) Carter, slain in his hospital bed and buried in a Mercedes-like casket, and Richard (White Boy Rick)Wershe Jr., sent to prison for life on cocaine charges.

Slim was fashionable in the 1970s with drug figures James (Memphis Slim) Wilkens, George (Texas Slim) Dudley and James Lee (Watusi Slim) Newton keeping police busy.

The federal drug trial of the Pony Down organization included Anthony (Snake or Snake Dog) Buttrum, Robert (Pimpchella) Latine, Kenneth (The Sleeper) Steele and LeRoy (Peter Gunn, Pee-Wee or G-Man) Buttrum Willis. All but Latine, who is a fugitive, were convicted.

Young Boys Inc. enforcer Dennis Franklin, serving a 60-to- 100-year term for killing a rival with an Uzi, also was known as **Frank** Nitti. Officials are unsure if the nickname was taken from the original Nitti, or from **Usher** .

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Frank Usher , 1979

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