

returned to U.S. District Court in Baltimore on Thursday to change his plea. Bald and slim, he said little in the courtroom beyond answering the judge. His wife, parents and brother sat behind him. # " After discussing it and looking at it in detail, " Merrill told the judge, " we decided this was the best choice for me and my family. " # Ledford, 55, is scheduled to change his plea to guilty in June, U.S. District Judge Richard Bennett told the courtroom. A third man, Cameron Jezierski, 28, of Texas, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud. He's scheduled to be sentenced in August. # The hearing Thursday for Merrill marked the downfall of a man who owned five homes, a fleet of foreign sports cars and share in a private plane. He amassed a designer wardrobe and a collection of comic books and sports memorabilia. Authorities say he decorated his home with art of the mustachioed Monopoly character Rich Uncle Pennybags. # Merrill grew up in Harford County and graduated from Joppatowne High School. He studied business at Slippery Rock and Towson universities, but did not graduate. He began his career as a salesman of X-ray machine supplies and through one customer met an accountant in Texas, Ledford. # The two became friends -- sporting events, gambling trips to casinos -- and Ledford began a business buying bundles of debt on student loans, credit cards and car loans known as " consumer debt portfolios. " Merrill saw Ledford making money, so he formed Delmarva Capital LLC to buy debt portfolios, too. # Over the years, Merrill bought more and more. In 2009, he was running his own collection business