



5 potential Spector trial jurors removed

By Peter Y. Hong, Times Staff Writer
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Lawyers in the Phil Spector murder trial removed five potential jurors today, a step forward in choosing the 12 who will decide whether the music producer shot actress Lana Clarkson to death in his home in 2003.

Among those eliminated were a woman who said she believed Spector was guilty, three who said they either had language difficulties or were unfamiliar with American law, and a man who said he remains affected by his nephew's suicide 15 years ago.

Judge Larry Paul Fidler ruled those jurors could be dismissed for cause, such as having a clear bias. In addition to dismissals for cause, each side can remove 20 jurors without explanation. Neither side has exercised any of those "peremptory challenges."

Lawyers said the pace of selection so far makes it likely jury selection will continue into next week.

Prosecutors and defense lawyers hinted through their questioning at some of the arguments that could emerge in the trial. When jurors mentioned relatives who committed suicide, Deputy Dist. Atty. Alan Jackson asked if the people had killed themselves in their own homes. To dispute defense claims Clarkson may have committed suicide, prosecutors likely will question whether she would have killed herself in a stranger's house.

One of the jurors excused said he could not be objective in the trial because he is haunted by the memory of his nephew's suicide. The nephew, he said, was 14 and had been caught driving his father's car. Fearing punishment, he shot himself with his father's gun.

Spector attorney Bruce Cutler, apparently seeking to find those resentful of celebrities, asked if jurors could distinguish "talent versus celebrity." When one juror mentioned Paris Hilton as a famous person in trouble, Cutler waked toward Spector, placed a hand on his shoulder and proclaimed "an example of talent." Pausing for effect, he continued, "versus celebrity."

The lawyers also attempted to warm up the jurors. When a woman who was not a native English speaker told Jackson she understood about half of what he said, Jackson quipped, "That's better than my girlfriend."

Roger Rosen, another Spector attorney, asked jurors to promise they would not think less of him because he was not as young and handsome as Jackson.

Clarkson was found dead of a gunshot through the mouth in Spector's home. Prosecutors contend Spector murdered her when she tried to leave against his wishes.

Spector claims she shot herself, either by accident or to commit suicide.

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