



## Expert disputes suicide angle in Spector case

**He challenges a defense theory that the actress committed suicide at Spector's home.**

By Peter Y. Hong, Times Staff Writer  
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A Los Angeles County medical examiner testified Tuesday that Lana Clarkson's death was a homicide, citing evidence, including bruises on her wrist, suggesting she put up a fight before her shooting inside Phil Spector's Alhambra mansion.

Deputy Medical Examiner Louis Pena's testimony strongly challenged the defense contention that Clarkson, a 40-year-old actress who met Spector the night of the killing at the House of Blues in West Hollywood, shot herself in the mouth.

Pena said that most people do not commit suicide in someone else's house, and when women shoot themselves, it is usually not in the head or face.

Crime scene details also were a factor in his conclusion, Pena said.

"It bothered me a lot that she had her purse on her right shoulder," he said of Clarkson, who was found slumped in a chair with her leopard-skin handbag over her arm. "It's difficult for someone to take a weapon and shoot herself with the purse staying on her shoulder. It should be off."

Looking straight at jurors, Pena said, "There was a statement made by the alleged perpetrator, 'I think I killed somebody,' which is quite important to me."

Spector, 67, the legendary producer of records for the Beatles, Righteous Brothers and Ike and Tina Turner among others, is charged with murdering Clarkson on Feb. 3, 2003. He is free on bail.

Spector's driver, Adriano DeSouza, testified earlier that the producer emerged from his home after a gunshot went off and said, "I think I killed somebody."

Pena's testimony essentially repeated the findings of his 2003 autopsy. The examiner said the fact that Clarkson went to Spector's home indicated she might have been seeking a contact in the entertainment world, a sign she was not despondent. "My thinking is if she thought it would boost her career, it shows hope," he said. Clarkson's medical records showed no diagnoses of depression, Pena added.

Pena said much of the evidence that led to his conclusion was circumstantial, and conceded, "It's kind of unusual for a medical examiner to do that." But he said he also considered physical evidence, including the fact that the gun appeared to have been wiped clean of blood, and that Clarkson's blood was found inside Spector's pants

pockets, suggesting he put his bloodied hands there.

"All the blood is hers," Pena noted of the pocket stains.

Pena said the bullet fired in Clarkson's mouth broke two teeth before severing her spinal cord, killing her almost instantly. At most, Pena said, Clarkson took "one shallow breath" after being shot.

Under questioning by Deputy Dist. Atty. Alan Jackson, Pena said Clarkson's tongue had been bruised, possibly by the gun barrel, before the shot was fired. Bruises on Clarkson's wrists were consistent with her resisting someone grabbing her wrists, Pena said.

During Pena's testimony, two of the defense medical experts, Vincent DiMaio and Werner Spitz, sat in the front row of the courtroom gallery, taking notes.

Clarkson's mother and sister, who had attended every day of the trial, were absent Tuesday. Their lawyer, Roderick Lindblom, said they did not want to see the gruesome crime scene and autopsy pictures or hear testimony about Clarkson's death.

Spector attorney Christopher Plourd was respectful and deliberate in cross-examining Pena. Much of Plourd's questions concerned Pena's high regard for defense experts DiMaio and Spitz, whose work helped him form conclusions about Clarkson. When told DiMaio was in the courtroom, Pena smiled warmly and waved at him. Plourd will continue cross-examining Pena today.

After jurors left for the day, Judge Larry Paul Fidler rejected a defense motion to limit testimony about a fingernail that prosecutors said defense forensics expert Henry Lee took from Spector's house and concealed. Fidler ruled last week that Lee kept something from prosecutors, although he couldn't say if it was a fingernail, and that jurors could hear testimony about the allegation to challenge Lee's credibility.

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