



## Coroner in Spector trial stays steadfast

By Peter Y. Hong, Times Staff Writer  
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The coroner who conducted Lana Clarkson's autopsy wrapped up four days of cross-examination in the Phil Spector murder trial Monday, sticking to his conclusion that the actress' death was a homicide.

Attorneys for Spector, the 67-year-old music legend charged with Clarkson's murder, cited e-mails and letters that suggested Clarkson, 40, had been despondent as they tried to show that she might have killed herself.

Christopher Plourd, one of Spector's six lawyers, quoted numerous excerpts from Clarkson's writings, including: "I'm giving up the dream and therefore the struggle," in an attempt to discredit medical examiner Louis Pena's conclusion.

Pena acknowledged he had not seen the writings, but said Clarkson's words would not have changed his finding of homicide.

Clarkson was found shot to death in the foyer of Spector's home on Feb. 3, 2003. Spector has pleaded not guilty to murder and is free on bail.

Plourd quoted Clarkson as saying she was in debt, suffered from severe headaches and was in constant pain from breaking both her arms in a fall. "Things are pretty bad. I won't go into detail, but I'm on the verge of losing it all," she wrote in one e-mail.

Prosecutor Alan Jackson read longer passages from the same e-mails to show that her words were less alarming in context. When Clarkson wrote about giving up the dream, for instance, it appeared that she was talking about relinquishing her goal of making it as a performer, not suicide, he said.

Jackson also read other e-mails in which Clarkson had combined expressions of distress over setbacks with cheerful discussions of plans and in some messages, holiday greetings.

Pena said those e-mails showed that Clarkson "was very positive, she was moving on."

Spector's attorneys had hoped to cross-examine Pena on other writings found on Clarkson's computer, but Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler said they concerned events in 1988 or 1989, long before Clarkson's death.

Also Monday, a search warrant was released that showed sheriff's homicide investigators had visited Spector's home Friday to correct what they contend were

missteps by famous forensic scientist Henry C. Lee, who is the defense's key witness.

Prosecutors plan to begin presenting testimony today that Lee allegedly had spirited a fingernail-sized object from the crime scene without telling the district attorney.

Prosecutors have said the object was a piece of Clarkson's fingernail that had blown off when she held her hand in front of her face to defend against Spector's gun. Lee has fiercely denied the accusation.

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