



## Her husband behind bars, Spector's wife breaks silence

Rachelle Spector, 28, scoffs at the notion that she's a gold digger, saying she's devoted to her role as the spokeswoman for the producer's cause and chief financial officer of his music empire.

By Harriet Ryan

June 5, 2009

Rachelle Spector arrived for lunch at the Beverly Hills Hotel with one French-manicured hand gripping a hot pink BlackBerry. "I never know when he is going to be allowed to call," she said as she laid the mobile device carefully on a velvety banquette. "Whenever he calls, I answer."

Ten miles east of the swank restaurant's cloth napkins and chopped salad, her husband, Phil Spector, the record producer and, as of six weeks ago, convicted murderer, was in L.A. County Jail, the first leg of a 19-years-to-life sentence.

"He's locked in a 5-by-9 cell, 23 1/2 hours a day," Rachelle Spector said. "They treat people worse than animals. I want that known."

During Spector's criminal trials, his 28-year-old wife was a constant and colorful presence, striding the courthouse halls in stiletto heels and engaging in a series of public spats with perceived enemies, including the trial judge. But a gag order barred her from speaking to the media and she remained a mystery, her unwavering attendance at the proceedings raising the daily question: Why would a pretty young woman tie her fate to a much older man accused of murder?

With Spector's sentencing last week, the gag order vanished and Rachelle Spector stepped forward to talk about her marriage and her new roles as a spokeswoman for his cause, coordinator of his appeals and chief financial officer of his multimillion-dollar music businesses.

### Former waitress

They are perhaps unlikely responsibilities for a former waitress who admits that she was not familiar with Spector, 69, or his music when they met six years ago in a West Hollywood restaurant. She knows their 41-year age difference and the fact that he married her while under indictment make many doubt the sincerity of their relationship.

"Younger woman, older man, gold digger, whatever," she said with a little laugh. "I don't take anything from my husband, and I never have. I'm a good person, but people don't see any of that or know how hard I work."

Some parts of Rachelle Spector do scream "trophy wife." She is a thin blond with a fondness for flawless makeup and close-fitting clothes. She wears a 9-carat diamond ring whose mere mention brings a joy to her face that other women might display when speaking of their children. "We designed it together," she squealed. Her background in modeling and her current aspiration to a singing career seem cliché for a decades-younger wife.

But there is also much about her that doesn't square with an unlined face chasing dollars. There is the almost masculine toughness that made Spector's bodyguards seem superfluous. "I can weed whack. Rip out walls. Lay tile," she said when discussing her favorite pastimes. She can be shockingly blunt. "We had sex. We were doing it all the time," she said when asked about rumors that her marriage was a business arrangement. And her approach to shopping is more T.J. Maxx than Fred Segal. Sitting two booths away from "Project Runway's" Heidi Klum at lunch, she bragged that her own pantsuit was 10 years old.

"I've had this since high school," she said proudly.

Most of all, there is the fact that her supposed meal ticket is gone, and so is much of his money. Under the terms of his sentence for the murder of actress Lana Clarkson, Spector will not be eligible for parole until 2028, when he is 88. He spent millions on his defense, and will spend more on his appeals. Rachelle Spector lives alone in the heavily mortgaged Alhambra mansion where Clarkson was shot on Feb. 3, 2003.

She would prefer selling the house, which is in need of repairs, and moving into an apartment, but her husband wants to keep the residence.

Rachelle Spector said royalties from Spector's work with acts including the Beatles, the Ronettes and Tina Turner have dropped significantly from the 1990s, when he was earning more than \$1 million a year. The company that administers his catalog "takes most of the royalties at this point," she said. It is difficult to verify her statements, and with a civil lawsuit by Clarkson's mother pending, Spector has reason to minimize his wealth.

Spector's daughter, Nicole, who at 26 is two years younger than her stepmother, described her relationship with Rachelle Spector as "amicable" and said she respected the care shown her father.

"At this moment in time, I'm very grateful for her," said Nicole Spector, a writer who lives in Brooklyn, N.Y. "If she were a gold digger we would be seeing the effects right now. I don't think she would be visiting him in jail every day."

Those visits are an extension of the relationship she and Spector had before he was convicted, friends say. She helped him dress for court, shaved his face, cut his nails, made him dinner, squeezed eye drops in his eyes, organized his medications and styled his hair.

Nino Tempo, a musician who met Spector in 1960 and was a witness at his wedding to Rachelle, said the producer was surprised when a younger woman showed interest in him, and he came to rely on her.

"With the weight of the trial, no one could be on top of his game, and Rachelle has been there to support Phil with every aspect of his daily routine," Tempo said. "He needed her."

It was the thought of her husband trying to care for himself in prison that made her weep at the verdict, she said. "I didn't think he'd last a week. He's a real small and fragile man," she said.

Rachelle Short grew up in Beaver Falls, Pa., a Rust Belt town of 9,000 north of Pittsburgh.

She tried college and worked as a model, but after a few years, she decided to pursue a singing career in Los Angeles. She was waiting tables at Jerry's Famous Deli in 2003, when on an evening off, she and Spector crossed paths at Dan Tana's, the clubby West Hollywood Italian restaurant where he was a regular.

"I had no idea who he was," she recalled. Her musical tastes ran toward hard-core rock acts like Marilyn Manson, and she had never heard of the "Wall of Sound" style that brought Spector renown four decades before.

She said she was attracted to older men in general, and Spector's intelligence and humor in particular. He stood accused of murder, but she knew little about it. "I didn't watch TV because I wanted to be out accomplishing things," and after she got to know him she didn't care.

"That man couldn't hurt a fly," she said. They married three years later in the run-up to his first murder trial.

"I said, 'Oh, Chelle, are you sure?' I questioned her, but she said she was," said her mother, Karen Murdock.

During both trials -- the first ended in a hung jury -- five women testified that Spector had pulled guns on them when he was drunk. From her seat in the front row of the courtroom, Rachele Spector listened to their testimony and dismissed them.

"I don't believe any of it," she said. In their time together, she said, Spector never became mean or displayed any weapons. (A prosecutor at both trials, Alan Jackson, said in response: "It's worth noting that once he was arrested and the house was searched every gun inside was seized.")

#### **Married in foyer**

She fully embraces the theory put forth by the defense and rejected by a jury that Clarkson took her own life as she sat in a chair in the entranceway of Spector's home.

Rachele Spector and the producer chose to marry in that foyer 3 1/2 years after Clarkson's death.

"Why wouldn't I?" she said, adding, "I sit in that chair all the time."

Discussing how empty the house seems without her husband, her voice wavers. "It's like I'm floating in the middle of nowhere. It's like I'm just hanging," she said.

But Spector sounds determined as she discusses the future. In the course of an hour, she referred to two different things as her "main focus."

The first is her husband's appeal. The second is her music career. She said her husband recorded her performing songs that he originally wrote for Celine Dion, Madonna and Trisha Yearwood.

"He could've sold [the music] to make money, but that's how much he believed in me," she said. She hopes to release the tracks but is waiting for his OK.

There is talk of rereleasing some of her husband's music, including recordings of his conversations with artists in the studio. His business affairs keep her occupied seven days a week, she said.

"I've always had a mind of an entrepreneur, so this comes easy. Plus I'm a Gemini and a very big multi-tasker," she said.

Her mother said she worried about the length of the sentence and the effect on her daughter. "I said, 'This is a long time, Rachele, to commit yourself to.' And she said, 'Mommy, I can't think about way in advance. What I am going to concern myself with is right now,'" Murdock said.

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