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Rachelle Spector Speaks About Husband's Sentence

ALHAMBRA, Calif. (AP) — Rachelle Spector will turn 29 next week, a pretty woman living alone in a 35-room Pyrenees-style castle while the lord of the manor -- music producer Phil Spector -- sits in prison.

Her story might seem the subject of a perverse fairy tale if it was not part of one of the strangest true crime sagas in show business.

Through two trials in which she was ordered to stay mum, Spector's wife has remained an enigma. She sat down this week for an interview with The Associated Press about her past, her life with the aging music legend and her new role at the helm of his financial empire while pressing an appeal she hopes will free him.

Her home is the "castle," a landmark edifice towering over the east Los Angeles suburb of Alhambra. She sat in the living room, a few feet from the foyer where actress Lana Clarkson met a bloody death six years ago. Rachelle married Spector after he was charged with second-degree murder in Clarkson's death.

Rachelle Spector's motives have been questioned by some. But she says it was all about love, not money, and expressed resentment toward those who call him unattractive.

"I find him very attractive and cute. I see him as this little boy, my best friend, the person I wake up to with his head on the pillow next to mine," she said.

Her remarks echo those of several women who testified about falling in love with the eccentric music man. However, those women told how they were later threatened with guns when they tried to leave him. Rachelle says she has never seen him threatening.

She describes him as "incredibly funny, witty and smart. A very caring person."

Anyone who watched Spector's two trials remembers Rachelle, the woman in stiletto heels guiding him into the courtroom, the frail defendant looking like he might fall over without her support.

For his last day in court, she said she brought him a suit and fixed his hair. "I wanted him to look nice for the sentencing."

"I'm all by myself now," she said. "We are each other's family. We're all that we have. It's so sad."

Spector, 69, was sentenced last week to 19 years to life behind bars for the murder of Clarkson, 40, an actress best known for her role in the 1980s film, "Barbarian Queen." The story of the aging pop maestro and the doomed actress has been told repeatedly during the trials, the first of which ended in a hung jury. But Rachelle's story has not been told until now.

Their romance was unexpected, she said, relating a classic Hollywood story of a girl who went west in search of a show business career.

Rachelle Short grew up in the small town of Beaver Falls, Pa., where she played trombone in her high



1 of 1 Click to enlarge

Music producer Phil Spector (left) is escorted by his wife Rachelle as he arrives at the Los Angeles Superior Court on April 13, 2009. Mark Ralston/Getty Images

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school marching band and performed with jazz combos. She and a sister were supported by their single mom, a waitress. After high school, she studied business and music in college but didn't graduate. She wanted to sing and headed for Hollywood to pursue her dream.

"When I was twenty and a half, I packed up and drove to California with \$150 in my pocket," she said. She worked as a waitress, restaurant manager, bartender and model while performing at small clubs. But she said that reports she was a Playboy model are false. "I'm not into that kind of thing," she said.

On Sept. 3, 2003, she met Spector at Dan Tana's restaurant, one of the spots he had gone exactly seven months before on the fateful night he met Clarkson. She said Spector invited her to join his group, which included some celebrity friends, and later they moved on to a club where "We ended up talking until six o'clock in the morning."

"He's been telling me he loved me since the first day we met," she said.

She claims she didn't know anything about Clarkson's shooting: "I don't watch TV so I was unaware of the situation that occurred." She also said she didn't know about Spector's reputation as a music legend: "I wasn't even born then. It was a different era."

Despite his wealth, the woman who now is vice president and chief financial officer of his dwindling empire insists that money played no role in the relationship. They married on Sept. 1, 2006. By then, Spector was facing trial for second-degree murder and Rachelle was running his business office.

Wedding pictures adorn the castle along with memorabilia including John Lennon's guitar and a certificate marking 9 million performances of the Righteous Brothers' hit, "You've Lost that Lovin' Feelin'," one of many songs produced with Spector's signature "wall of sound" technique.

Rachelle sat through both trials and is convinced Clarkson killed herself, perhaps accidentally while "messing around" with a gun.

"It's a very sad situation but people do stupid things," she said. "Unfortunately, this one was permanent."

The phone rang while she spoke. It was Spector calling from the jail but before she could turn him over to a reporter for a comment, the connection was cut off. She said he wanted her to make a statement on his behalf that he is not responsible for Clarkson's death and that top forensic scientists have testified that he couldn't have shot her. "He feels very strongly he will prevail on appeal," she said.

Rachelle's life now is that of wife in waiting and businesswoman. She spends most days on the phone with New York, London and California dealing with affairs of Spector's music companies, his estate and legal cases. A lawyer is working on his appeal, she said, and another will soon be hired for the civil suit brought by Clarkson's family.

Spector will eventually be sent to a final destination in the prison system in 60 to 90 days.

Rachelle said she will get an apartment near him and visit as often as she can. As for the castle, she said, "It's not for sale even though people keep wanting to buy it."

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