



Spector jury goes home for weekend

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Jurors in the Phil Spector murder trial entered their ninth day of deliberations Friday armed with new legal instructions devised to help them break a 7-5 deadlock, but they later retired without reaching a verdict.

The jury of nine men and three women told the court Tuesday morning that they were at an impasse. They did not reveal which way the 7-5 split was leaning.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Larry Fidler, prosecutors and the defense team spent much of three days arguing new language and instructions. The judge also withdrew one instruction that jurors said gave them problems. Jurors began the current round of deliberations Thursday afternoon and will resume work Monday.

Spector, 67, is charged with shooting Lana Clarkson, 40, on Feb. 3, 2003. If convicted, he faces 15 years to life in prison.

It is not unusual for a jury to have questions about the evidence or how to interpret the legal instructions that are supposed to guide their deliberations. But the wrangling in recent days has been unusual, in part because it came after the jury said it was deadlocked.

Some jurors said they had a problem with an instruction stating that if they wanted to convict, they had to agree that Spector pointed the gun at Clarkson and that the act led to the gun entering her mouth and eventually discharging.

The new instruction, which Fidler adopted over vigorous protests from the defense, outlines several possible scenarios for what took place in Spector's Alhambra mansion, including that the famous music producer forced the gun into Clarkson's mouth, or that there was a struggle resulting in the gun entering her mouth and discharging.

"By using these examples, I am not suggesting that any of these acts took place," Fidler said. "These are inferences you may draw from the evidence but are not required to do so. You may reject them."

Despite that warning, most experts agree the new instruction gives the jury more leeway to convict than the old one.

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Credit: Times Staff Writer