



Spector trial jury still undecided

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Spector trial jury still undecided; An 'implied threat' to the presiding judge, posted on a MySpace page, was removed and is under investigation.

The jury in the Phil Spector murder trial worked behind closed doors Tuesday to determine whether the famed music producer killed an actress more than four years ago.

No word was heard from the panel, which has been deliberating for more than 40 hours over 11 days.

The biggest development related to the case, however, may have come outside the courtroom. A possible threat was made Tuesday against Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler, who has run the Spector trial for months.

It came in a posting on a My- Space page titled Official Team Spector that stated, "The evil judge should die."

It was signed "Chelle," which is how some friends refer to Spector's wife, Rachelle. Several weeks ago she clashed with Fidler, and the judge issued a gag order to prevent her from giving television interviews. She later wrote a note of apology, which the judge accepted.

Defense attorney Christopher J. Plourd said that Rachelle Spector was not involved in the posting, which was taken down.

Steve Whitmore, a spokesman for the Sheriff's Department, called the posting "an implied threat" and said his agency was investigating it. "We take any threat against a judicial officer very seriously," he said.

The jury of nine men and three women has been deliberating since Sept. 10, but parts of three days were lost while lawyers and Fidler argued over new instructions intended to help break a deadlock.

The jury, without revealing which way it was leaning, had reported Sept. 18 that it was split 7 to 5. But since Fidler polled jurors about the impasse and adjusted the instructions, they have been deliberating about 4 1/2 hours a day, while communicating very little to the court.

The jurors are to resume discussions today.

Spector is charged in the death of Lana Clarkson, 40, whose body was found in the foyer of his Alhambra home Feb. 3, 2003. They had met for the first time hours earlier at the House of Blues, where Clarkson worked as a hostess in the VIP area.

Prosecutors said Spector, who was responsible for landmark records by John Lennon, the Righteous Brothers and the Ronettes, killed Clarkson when she tried to leave his mansion. The defense said that Clarkson was despondent over her life and her flagging career and shot herself in the mouth, either accidentally or in a suicide.

If convicted of second-degree murder, Spector, 67, faces 15 years to life in prison.

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Credit: Times Staff Writer