

Spector driver tried to escape after seeing gun, bloodied body

by Matt Krasnowski

LOS ANGELES - Phil Spector's former chauffeur testified Wednesday that he was afraid he would be shot and tried to flee after seeing the rock 'n' roll record producer holding a gun and walking away from the bloodied body of actress Lana Clarkson.

"I tried to escape from that place. He could shoot me," witness Adriano DeSouza told jurors in Spector's murder trial.

In his second day of testimony, DeSouza filled in more details about what he witnessed at Spector's mansion more than four years ago. On Tuesday, DeSouza said he heard a loud noise and then minutes later saw Spector walk out of the house holding a gun with blood on his hand. Spector then said, "I think I killed somebody."

DeSouza said Wednesday that after he saw Clarkson slumped in a chair in Spector's foyer, he first tried to run away, then returned to the car and drove outside the mansion's gate. He first left a telephone message with Spector's assistant and then dialed 911.

Prosecutors played recordings of DeSouza's calls for jurors.

"I think my boss killed somebody," DeSouza, who spoke with an accent and at times stammered, told a dispatcher.

Asked why he thought that, he replied, "Because you - he, he have a lady on the floor and he have a gun in, in his hand."

"I hear the, uh, uh, uh, uh - like a noise. And then he opened the door and 'I think he - I killed her,'" DeSouza said later.

DeSouza is key to the prosecution's murder case against the 67-year-old Spector, which contends he "confessed" to the driver about killing Clarkson, 40. The government is seeking a second-degree murder conviction and Spector could face 15 years to life in prison.

But the defense has argued that Clarkson killed herself and that DeSouza, a native of Brazil, misunderstood

Spector.

Spector lawyer Bradley Brunon on Wednesday started his cross-examination of the witness, trying to chip away at his credibility and portray DeSouza's grasp of English as far from perfect.

Under defense questioning, DeSouza admitted that he violated terms of a student travel visa that allowed him to enter the United States.

DeSouza is expected back in court next week.

With jurors out of court in the afternoon, attention in the trial returned to an intriguing sideshow centering on a purported piece of evidence allegedly collected by the defense at the crime scene and never turned over to prosecutors.

The central figure in the drama, renowned forensic expert Henry Lee, took the witness stand and denied previous accounts from a former Spector lawyer and a private investigator that he collected what appeared to be a broken fingernail chip.

"I feel pretty upset," Lee testified, when questioned about the allegations by San Diego-based defense lawyer Christopher Plourd. "I think my reputation is severely damaged."

The alleged missing evidence issue is expected to be settled at a later hearing.

Copley News Service

Spector driver tried to escape after seeing gun, bloodied body by Matt Krasnowski