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Bruce Cochran, a senior deputy in the County Counsel's office, also has been covering the Phil Spector trial for TV audiences. On Thursday, he was scheduled to provide legal commentary on the jury's visit to Spector's Alhambra mansion, scene of the 2003 death of actress Lana Clarkson.



Photos by Bill Heard

## Metro Lawyer Gives TV Viewers a Legal View of Phil Spector Trial

- Bruce Cochran provides courtroom commentary for KTLA, Court TV
- Commentary ranges from complimentary to harshly critical

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Aug. 9, 2007) Not since O.J. Simpson has a celebrity murder case attracted as much national attention as the Phil Spector trial. And right in the middle of it, providing expert legal commentary for television audiences, is Metro's Bruce Cochran, a senior attorney in the County Counsel's office.

Spector, 67, the legendary music producer, has been on trial for four months in LA Superior Court for allegedly killing actress Lana Clarkson at his Alhambra mansion in February 2003. It's the first televised trial in Los Angeles County since the O.J. trial.

Cochran, 54, who has been a trial attorney for 28 years, is one of two legal commentators covering the Spector trial for KTLA's gavel-to-gavel webcast and also provides commentary for Court TV. He expects the case to go to the jury later this month.

"At this point, and I'm certainly not prosecution-oriented," says Cochran, "I think there will be a conviction."

Throughout the trial, he has expressed admiration for the case being presented by the prosecution and has been particularly complimentary of Assistant District Attorney Alan Jackson – "one of the best trial attorneys I've ever seen."

**Statement was 'a disaster'**

At the same time, he has been harshly critical of Spector's lead attorney Bruce Cutler, who gained fame for defending New York mobster John Gotti. He called Cutler's opening statement "a disaster."

Of the defense team, Cochran says, "They've been pretty disorganized and I don't think the defense and the themes they've presented to the jury are really plausible. I don't think the jury is going to buy it."

That, despite his hunch that Clarkson's death may actually have been an accident. "I don't think the defense is really conveying that properly to the jury."

How have Cochran's colleagues in the legal profession reacted to his commentary? "I've received no criticism...the reaction has been very good." In fact, he often receives favorable phone calls from other lawyers as well as from members of the public.

As he might prepare for trial, Cochran literally started from scratch as a TV legal commentator by enrolling a couple of years ago in a UCLA Extension broadcast journalism course. Then, he served a period as a newsroom intern at KTLA – "I was the oldest intern in captivity."

The internship brought him to the attention of KTLA's Marta Waller, who asked him to provide commentary during her live webcasts of the Spector trial.



Senior Deputy County Counsel Bruce Cochran and his boss, Assistant County Counsel Charles Safer, discuss a real estate case involving Metro. In his off time, Cochran provides legal commentary for KTLA's daily webcast and for Court TV.

**A first-hand view**

On the days he works with Waller, Cochran watches the trial proceedings on a TV monitor in KTLA's studio or actually goes into the courtroom to get a first-hand view of the lawyers and the witnesses, and the reactions of the judge and members of the jury. When the court takes a break, he and Waller discuss what has just occurred.

On some days, after court has adjourned and the KTLA webcast has wrapped, he moves to the Court TV studio for remote interviews with an

anchor located in New York City.

All together, Cochran spends about one day a week as a commentator for the Spector trial. He's been able to manage the TV appearances while also keeping up with his legal work for Metro. The time he has spent preparing for trials involving the transit agency – the most recent was in April – has piled up his comp time.

In fact, observing other lawyers at work has improved his own performance before the bar, Cochran believes. He often squirms when he sees a lawyer making a misstep in court and realizes he's made the same mistake. "I say to myself, 'Don't do that again, don't ever do that again.'"

Cochran grew up in Kansas City, Mo. He graduated from Rockhurst University, a Jesuit school, and earned his law degree at the University of Missouri. He moved to the Los Angeles area in 1978 and worked for five years at a Century City law firm.

**Tries cases for Metro**

He and a partner then opened a criminal defense practice which he continued until 1999, when he joined the County Counsel's office. At Metro, Cochran oversees outside law firms involved in litigation for the agency and also tries cases for Metro in court, working with others on the County Counsel's staff.

"The fun thing about practicing law is trying cases in front of juries," he says. "I'm a frustrated actor, I know that. A trial is theater. You have to put on a show and you have to do it right."

Outside of his work for Metro and his TV appearances, Cochran is active in the community. He recently completed a term as chairman of the board of the AIDS Research Alliance. It was a fellow board member, William Morris agent Marc Itken, who suggested he try TV commentary.

For personal creativity, Cochran is a certified pastry chef – "My second mid-life crisis." He earned his certificate as a pastry chef through a UCLA Extension course and by serving, again as an intern, at the Sunset Boulevard restaurant Fenix.

So, how do the law and the culinary arts compare?

"Litigation takes longer than you think it will, never comes out like you thought it would and at the end, everyone hates you, including your client," he chuckles. "With baking a chocolate mousse cake, there's a definite period when it gets made, it usually comes out exactly like I expected it to, and everybody loves me!"