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Judge Declares Painseeker Jury "Ready To Go"

Levin Defends Selection Tactics

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LOS ANGELES -- Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Michael Rodriguez declared that opening statements in the Painseeker Murder Trial will begin on Thursday after attorneys impaneled the final three jurors and six alternates. The judge also warned both sides that he intends the trial to proceed in a dignified manner.

Wednesday's session proceeded much as it had Tuesday, with no sign of the fireworks that ended Monday's jury selection before noon. The only disturbance came from defense attorney Les Levin after Judge Rodriguez refused to dedicate Thursday to hearing a series of Levin's pre-trial motions.

Rodriguez chose instead to hear the defense's motions in his chambers immediately after court adjourned for the day. After further requests for reconsideration from Levin, Judge Rodriguez responded, "Like it or not, counsel, this jury is ready to go and this trial is ready to go."

The prosecution was clearly emboldened by Levin's apparent floundering, openly speculating as to his motives and courtroom demeanor.

"He [Levin] didn't do himself any favors at the end today," noted Assistant District Attorney Thomas Andrews. "He came across as desperate in front of the jury. I expected better from him . . . It's probably the short turnaround that has him off his game."

The high-profile Levin was named to Laura Douglass' defense only two weeks ago as a replacement for public defender Elaine Streiber. Despite having ample grounds and opportunity to ask for a continuance, Levin has refused to do so.

Unlike previous days, Les Levin made a point to answer questions when leaving the courthouse. In response to prosecution's claim that his performance in court due to a lack of preparedness, Levin declared, "I have a client who has been in jail for seven months. Inadequate counsel? Which would you rather have, me with two weeks to prepare or a public defender with no experience in a first-degree murder case? Ms. Douglass made her choice and we are confidently moving in that direction."

Levin bristled at the prosecution's earlier suggestion that his behavior on Monday was an attempt to ensure that the jury would not hear the opening of the prosecution's case until next week.

On Monday, Levin argued with both the prosecution and Judge Rodriguez over his decision to remove several potential jurors exclusively for the amount of time they spent surfing the Internet.

"I think it's very important to point out that the only reason this case is being prosecuted because of the Internet. [The Painseeker web site] is an offense to Ms. Douglass' constitutionally protected presumption of innocence."

Levin admitted that he attempted to shut down the site, but was denied.

“I only requested that it be pulled during the trial. Every day this trial goes on, [the media] reports that there’s a web site with inside information regarding the case. The truth is, it

doesn’t. The site is a lie. That site disseminates the lie that my client is guilty for the murder of her best friend.”

When asked if he didn’t trust the jury (as the prosecution suggested), Levin snapped, “Why shouldn’t I trust them? I picked them.”