

Reporter makes mark with court coverage

By Keith M. Jajko

The Enterprise Staff

Associated Press reporter Linda Deutsch just checked into her room at the Radisson Hotel in Simi Valley, fresh from what may end up being the turning point in the Rodney King trial at East County Courthouse.

She explained why a split between defense lawyers of four Los Angeles police officers on trial for the videotaped beating of King last year was subtle to the uninitiated, yet dynamite for writers.

The day's proceedings had left her tired, yet she returned to the small keyboard in the room to send a story that thousands of newspapers — including this one — would publish and millions of people would read.

"It's a kind of a day that's kind of interesting to someone who's covered the whole trial," she said.

Known as American journalism's most notable trial reporter, Deutsch, 48, began her career as an entertainment writer, soon after a meeting with her uncle, retired Thousand Oaks News Chronicle editor Marv Sosna.

Sosna, who edited the nearby paper for 26 years before retiring in December 1990, convinced Deutsch to use her writing skills

as a reporter, she said. She calls Sosna her mentor.

Since moving to the area from New Jersey to pursue a job at a San Bernardino that fell through, Deutsch went from an entertainment writer at AP to watching testimonies unfold in a series of notable trials.

Her experiences center on the most closely watched trials of the past two decades, including those of Patty Hearst, Charles Manson, Daniel Ellsberg, John De Lorean, former Arizona Gov. Evan Mecham, Richard Ramirez and Exxon Valdez skipper Joseph Hazelwood.

Additionally, her work has followed civil court action in the palimony case of Marvin vs. Marvin and Art Buchwald's plagiarism suit against Paramount Pictures.

She also has covered parole hearings for Sirhan Sirhan and Manson. For those interested, Deutsch believes neither will ever be let out of prison.

Yet Deutsch's travels have landed her in Simi Valley — the smallest town she's visited while covering America's most celebrated trials.

Initially in disbelief that the trial was moved so close to Los
(Please see DEUTSCH, Page 8)



Mark Pickering/The Enterprise Staff

TOP GUN: AP reporter Linda Deutsch, doyenne of American trial journalists, has covered the nation's most sensational court cases.

Deutsch

(Cont. from Page 1)

Angeles, Deutsch on Thursday said the trial evolved much, much differently with the change of venue.

"It would have been a different trial in Los Angeles, no question," she said. Among the differences she cited a lack of protests and in general less fanfare because not many Angelenos are willing to commute to Ventura County to watch the trial.

"L.A.'s fate hung so much on the case that it could not be there."

Deutsch's work hasn't even allowed time to see the city. Her worries tackling the first jury trial in the new courthouse were more immediate, like arranging working quarters in an adjacent courtroom-turned-media-center.

She has missed lunches to transmit stories and has hurried to the hotel to file final versions by 9 p.m.

The veteran trial journalist was assigned to the case fresh from covering the sensational William Kennedy Smith trial in Florida.

Her most vivid memories include:

- Seeing reporters cry for the first time during the Nightstalker testimonies. Ramirez was eventually sentenced to die.

- Covering Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers case, which she calls the trial of the Vietnam War. She was recently reunited with Ellsberg about 20 years after the trial. She also has kept contact with De Lorean.

- The 10½-month Manson trial, which convinced AP's editors that Deutsch could handle any trial.

She remembers how she got the assignment.

"I think part of it was when the Sharon Tate thing came up," Deutsch said. "I think I was one of the few who knew who she was."

- Watching the Kennedy family unravel during the Smith trial, which she said involved an American dynasty but focused more on the issue of rape.

"The importance was the effect on the Kennedy legend," she said.

The shift from entertainment and Hollywood to courtroom drama was not extreme. Deutsch says each offers drama and entertainment.

Her entertainment work has continued each year covering the Oscar awards. She has missed the gala only twice — when she was sent to frigid Alaska for the Hazelwood trial and this year when Powell was expected to take the stand. He did the day after.

Deutsch is not limited to the court. She has covered the pullout of Vietnam, fires in Santa Barbara

and last year reported on a farmer's plight in Bakersfield battling the drought.

But it is in the court where she is known.

"On court stories there's nobody better. She's really in her element with the King trial," said Steve Loeper, news editor at AP's Los Angeles bureau. "Her talents to digest this tremendous amount of information ... is amazing."

The King finale will depend on the jury, each with a different set of standards and beliefs.

She had the opportunity to see first hand how juries work when she was chosen as a juror in a municipal court misdemeanor case near her Hollywood home.

Although most journalists are routinely dismissed from jury duty, Deutsch was allowed to stay. But the judge had to ask if she would be bored hearing a drug paraphernalia possession case.

She wasn't.

"Jurors, when they're chosen, take their responsibility so seriously," she said. "It takes over their lives. I'm sure in this case (King) it is."

For the local court, the days after Los Angeles' high-profile lawyers leave will be a story itself, she said. She expects the case to wind down this week.

"It will be interesting to see how it will be after, when it goes back to normal."

Asimov

(Cont. from Page 1)

His first novel, "Pebble Sky," came out in 1950. "Robotics" in his second collection, "Robot," a 1950 collection of stories about the evolution of sentient machine human society.

He required that each brain be programmed with immutable commands: Robots may not injure or, by inaction, allow a human to be harmed; robots must obey humans' orders unless it conflicts with the first law; robots must protect their own lives unless that conflicts with two laws.

Other notable novels include "The Caves of Steel" in 1954 and "The Naked Sun" in 1957, a police officer is teamed with a robot detective.

Robot and "Foundation" eventually expanded and combined in 14 novels. Together, they formed a picture of humanity in millennia to spread through the stars of earth itself all but forgo the people still in the human nature.

A final novel, "Forward Foundation," finished

Cars

(Cont. from Page 1)

Nesen said Satin Hyundai was

tion.

The remaining eight car dealerships are asking city officials for help, including participation in advertising campaigns, low-interest loans and eliminating restrictions on the use of flags and

sales at Galpin Hyundai also have gone up. He attributed the increase to the drop in competition.

The Nesen Co. hasn't suffered the same downfall. The quarter-billion-dollar company services five lines of cars: Cadillac, Lexus,

Primary

(Cont. from Page 1)

"Donahue" show.