

More than a hundred potential jurors in the Stewart Murder Case showed up inside a Stanly County Courtroom yesterday, but not a single person was selected to serve. About 30 stood before Moore County Superior Court Judge James Webb and asked to be excused for one reason or another. Some argued personal hardship, such as being self-employed, others told the judge they couldn't serve for medical reasons. One woman asked to be excused because she is getting married next week. "I find that a compelling personal hardship," said Webb with a smile. So far lawyers have picked eight jurors, but they need to pick four more and at least three alternates by the time the actual trial starts in Moore County. A total of 190 Stanly County Residents were summoned as potential jurors for the trial of Robert Stewart. During a bloody rampage the 47-year-old part-time house painter murdered eight people in a Carthage nursing home two years ago. Defense lawyers say they will argue their client is innocent of murder-one because of an altered mental state when he committed the crimes. It is expected that the defense team will claim Stewart was under the influence of alcohol and the prescription sleep medication "Ambien" at the time of the killings. Under North Carolina Law, it is permissible for Stewart to claim he was not in control of his actions. Defense Lawyers have been trying to find jurors who indicate they would be open to such a defense.