

Defense witnesses took the stand yesterday in the trial of Mass-Murderer Robert Stewart and the picture that which emerged was that of a man under the influence of powerful prescription drugs when he took the lives of eight people. Andrew Mason, a former state toxicologist who the defense hired to test Stewart's blood, called Ambien "A very potent sedative or hypnotic drug" that has many side effects. Some Ambien users, according to Mason, have reported driving, preparing meals or committing acts of violence and having no recollection of the events. "They are shown evidence of their actions after the fact, and have no knowledge of experiencing them." Defense Lawyer Jonathan Megerian is pinning his case on the fact that his client was heavily under the influence of Ambien and has no recollection of committing the grisly murders two years ago in the Pinelake Health And Rehabilitation Center. A blood test taken hours after the murders showed Stewart was also taking two anti-depressants at the time of the shootings. Prosecutors argue that Stewart was seeking revenge against his former wife who left him two weeks before his bloody rampage. Wanda Neal worked at Pinelake and was on duty the day of the killings. That Neal didn't end up one of Stewart's victims was because she hid herself behind locked doors in the secure Alzheimers Unit of the nursing home.