

Sunday March 29 2009, 10am
Carthage, North Carolina, population 1,871
Pinelake Nursing Home

8 Dead, Police officer wounded

Tessie Garner, 88
Lillian Dunn, 89
Jessie Musser, 88
Bessie Hendrick, 78
John Goldston, 78
Margaret Johnson, 89
Louise Decker, 98
Nurse Jerry Avent, 39, (shot more than two dozen times)

Officer Justin Garner was shot in the leg while responding to the shooting.

After the attack, six people were taken by ambulance to the nearby FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital, a hospital spokeswoman said. By early evening, three had been released, one was still being treated and two had died.

Robert Stewart 45 years old arrested, not a patient or relative of the victims.

Mr. Stewart's ex-wife (Sue Griffin) said he had recently been reaching out to family members, telling them that he had cancer and that he was preparing to "go away."

Married to Mr. Stewart for 15 years. They had not spoken since divorcing in 2001, she said, but he had been trying to call her over the past week through her son, mother, sister and grandmother.

Ms. Griffin said Mr. Stewart had once been a painter.

"He did have some violent tendencies from time to time," Ms. Griffin said. "I wouldn't put it past him. I hate to say it, but it is true."

Bobby Hyman, 48, who lives a half-mile from Mr. Stewart's residence, said Mr. Stewart rented the house and 10 acres of land and moved in about a year ago.

Mr. Hyman described Mr. Stewart as "just a good old country farm guy." "He'd let me know if anybody went on my property he didn't recognize," Mr. Hyman said.

"The shooter entered the facility heavily armed and began shooting at people in wheelchairs," North Carolina state Senator Harris Blake

Police cordoned off the nursing home's parking lot after finding a camouflaged rifle leaning against a Jeep Cherokee.