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### Suspect's attorneys claim mental illness in rape trial

**Byline:** *Melissa E. Holsman staff writer*

**Source:**

STUART -- A Rocky Point woman raped nearly three years ago as she slept in bed with her now husband on Tuesday faced the next-door neighbor authorities say slipped naked through a back door and into the couple's bed. "I thought I was having a strange dream. I felt someone touching me between my legs, and I sort of woke up and said 'what are you doing?'" the 55-year-old woman testified, struggling to remain calm.

The defendant, Asher Jones, then 23, allegedly sexually assaulted her before she realized the man in bed with her wasn't her husband, whom she married after the incident.

"I realized there was someone else in the bed, and I just started kicking and hitting, and I was out of there in a flash," she said. "I was standing there looking at the bed, and there was something in it, and I was pretty frightened."

When her husband heard her cries, he rolled over and reached for her but instead got a handful of "coarse" hair, not at all what he expected, he testified.

The assailant wriggled free and bolted from the home.

As he fled, the couple recognized the man as Jones, a longtime neighbor who lived with his mother, she said.

Jones' **attorneys** -- who described him as suffering from a "slow progression into mental illness" -- didn't deny he'd committed the crime but insisted he wasn't guilty because he was insane at the time.

"The mere facts ... are in and of itself evidence of the client being insane at the time of the commission of the crime," Stuart lawyer **Lance Richard** said.

Tuesday afternoon a jail official confirmed that Jones has been taking anti-psychotic medications since his 2002 arrest and has reported

hearing voices and suffering delusions.

Prosecutors rested their case Tuesday. Today, mental health experts are expected to describe how Jones had suffered from mental instability and had displayed some "very strange behavior" that culminated in the incident.

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