

Strong again, but less trusting

77-year-old recalls attack, vows recovery

THE garish purple bruises are still wrapped around 77-year-old Margaret Peters' throat, but the feisty victim of an Easter weekend home invasion said Monday she'll walk alone again.

Peters' case made national headlines when two unknown men attacked the widow in her Fort Rouge home April 5 while she prepared a holiday meal.

The two men threatened and then beat the retired nurse with a rifle, knocked her down her back stairs, and left the grandmother of 18 to lie in a puddle of her own blood and vomit until a relative discovered her hours later.

Now out of hospital with facial and neck injuries, as well as a broken foot, the petite woman is forging a slow recovery.

"I'd ask those men to consider their elders instead of abusing them," said Peters, a quavering smile peeking through the bruises around her eyes and mouth. "One grabbed me by my throat, and I thought, how can I get out of here alive?

A police spokeswoman said Monday the two men involved in the crime have not been apprehended, but investigators continue to look into the assault. Descriptions of the attackers by Peters are also minimal because of the viciousness of the assault.

Bundled in blankets in the Dudley Avenue home where the attack occurred, Peters said she turned to her faith during the assault for her survival.

"It's what I kept thinking of all the time: Lord, only you can bring me out of this," she said.

A devout Christian famed among her neighbours for delivering home-baked hot-cross buns and garden tomatoes, Peters is now reliant on relatives to help her navigate around her home with a walker.

Posted in the flower-filled living room of Peters' home is an inspirational Bible psalm handwritten by a teenage grandson. Not everyone is as kind, Peters said she's learned. Opening her back door to strangers was a mistake, she said.

"I've learned not to be so trusting of people," she said.

"I'm going to remain independent with a lot of caution."

The widow is an intrepid traveller and active volunteer, and said she's grateful for the dozens of letters, telephone calls, cards, and flowers she's received from well-wishing friends and strangers who heard about the Easter attack.

Online tributes have been posted to the retired nurse, and her son Clarence Peters said his mother is facing her recovery with her typical tenacity.

"It really has touched a community nerve," he said.

His mother brags to her children that soon she'll be back crafting the quilts she makes for community groups to raise funds. One thing she'll be missing as she goes about her handiwork is an heirloom ring the attackers made off with.

The band contained a diamond given to her in 1953 by her now-deceased husband for their engagement, as well as five coloured stones signifying the birth months of her five grown children.

"I just wanted to have my whole family on my finger," said Peters.

Those with information about the attack are encouraged to contact Crime Stoppers at 786-TIPS, or 786-8477.

