



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Janet Mountney can't relax in her Stouffville-area home any longer after thieves stole money, a camera and jewelry while she was cutting the lawn one afternoon late last year.

Residents were home when thieves struck

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Janet Mountney used to leave her house and car doors unlocked and never once did she feel unsafe on her three-acre property that sits on the Durham side of the York-Durham Line just outside Stouffville.

But now, the 79-year-old is a constant bundle of nerves living behind locked doors.

Mountney took advantage of a warm, sunny October afternoon to get in what would perhaps be her lawn's last cut of the year.

So, too, did a thief, who stole jewelry, a camera and cash from the widow's home.

The theft occurred between 3 and 5 p.m. Oct. 11.

Mountney left her garage door open, as well as the door unlocked that led from the garage into the home.

She has lived in the home for 40 years and has never had any trouble until that day.

"I think they had a lot of guts because they didn't know who was in the house," Mount-

ney said.

The petite woman didn't realize anything was missing until roughly 8:30 that night when she went into her bedroom.

That is when she noticed her dressing table wasn't as she left it. The thief or thieves also went through her night stand and stole \$60 from the wallet of her deceased husband Dennis.

"My husband was a veteran and I really resent that," she said.

Money she inherited from her brother, who died in 2009, was also taken. She planned on donating it to George Brown College.

"Stupid me kept it in the house," she said. Sunglasses, as well as a camera and its instruction book and cords were also stolen.

Among the jewelry swiped were rings that once belonged to her mother and mother-in-law, a silver charm bracelet given to her by her late husband, as well as a ruby and diamond ring from a now-deceased friend.

Mountney has no idea of their cash value.

The case was investigated by police, but unfortunately, other than the description of a generic white van seen in the area at the time by a neighbour, there were no leads, according to Sgt. Nancy van Rooy, media relations officer for Durham Regional Police.

There were no reports of other thefts in the area that day, according to van Rooy.

Money she inherited from her brother, who died in 2009, was also taken. She planned on donating it to George Brown College.

Unless the jewelry is extremely unique, van Rooy said they can be very difficult to locate. Between online buy/sell websites such as Kijiji and eBay as well as pawn shops, those pieces could be anywhere.

van Rooy said it is "within the realm of possibility" Mountney was targeted or it could have been someone driving by who saw an opportunity and took it.

"I don't think this was difficult for the suspects," she said.

Following the theft, Mountney did not leave her house for two weeks.

"I couldn't do anything. I was so shocked," she said.

"It absolutely knocked me sideways. I couldn't move," she said.

She is not alone.

A Stouffville resident told The Sun-Tribune about a similar incident last month. Thieves rang the bell at his suburban home, entered, ransacked a room and stole jewelry before the homeowner realized what happened.

Five homes were broken into in south Stouffville in late 2011. They were all ransacked and jewelry was taken.

The incidents led to the formation of a Neighbourhood Watch unit near Oscar Peterson Public School.



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