

The Miami Herald

Posted on Mon, May. 20, 2013

Victim of Miami 'zombie' attack makes strides in recovery, doctors say

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Courtesy of Jackson Health System

One of the updated photos released of Ronald Poppo, 66, the man who was left blinded when he was attacked and his face was chewed on the MacArthur Causeway in Miami on May of 2012.

One year after surviving a savage, bizarre attack in Miami that left him blind, beaten and facially disfigured, Ronald Poppo is continuing his recovery at a long-term care facility in Cutler Bay.

Poppo's caregivers said he is in good spirits and plays guitar every day in his room at Jackson Memorial Perdue Medical Center, and he has put on about 50 pounds since the Memorial Day weekend attack on the MacArthur Causeway.

As doctors continue to treat Poppo's significant facial injuries, occupational therapists and workers from Miami Lighthouse for the Blind have helped him learn to dress, feed and shave himself.

His surgeons, nurses and therapists gave a full update on his condition Tuesday at Jackson Memorial Hospital.

Poppo is content and healthier than he was a year ago, they said. He has repeatedly declined to have further reconstructive surgery or to have contact with family members or anyone else outside of his treatment center.

"We've asked if he'd like us to rebuild his nose and eyes with his own tissue, or to replace them with prosthetics, but he very kindly lets us know he's not interested," said Dr. Umen Desai, one of Poppo's plastic surgeons. "He's blind, so he can't

see what he looks like now, and it doesn't matter to him how the world sees him. He's happy and grateful to be alive."

Poppo, who turned 66 on Friday, recorded a brief video, thanking people who have supported him over the past year.

The Jackson Memorial Foundation has received more than \$100,000 to assist with Poppo's medical care. People also can use the Twitter hashtag #Wishes4Poppo to send him notes, which Poppo's nurses will read to him next week.

Poppo had been homeless in Miami for decades, often finding shelter in a parking garage at Jungle Island.

He was hanging out a few blocks west of there, on the Miami side of the MacArthur Causeway, last May 26, when a man named Rudy Eugene [viciously attacked him](#), tearing off Poppo's clothes and chewing apart most of the homeless man's face.

Police shot and killed Eugene, 31, at the scene. It remains unclear what prompted the brutal attack; Poppo did not provoke Eugene, and investigators said Eugene had no [drugs in his system](#) other than marijuana.

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