

Tahoe climber survives harrowing fall in New Zealand

By John Lewis, Otago Daily Times

The moment Matt Stewart clicked his safety harness on to the line, he realized his mistake.

The 33-year-old Lake Tahoe resident had on Jan. 5 climbed to the top of a 20m-high crag (about the height of a five-story building) at Hospital Flat, near Wanaka in New Zealand and was preparing to abseil down.

He hooked on to the wrong line, and fell to the ground. By all accounts, he should have died. He still marvels at his extraordinary survival.

He broke his back and both legs in the fall, and there had been a time when he thought he would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

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