

Coeur d'Alene women describe downtown fall, broken bones

By Scott Maben/SR scottm@spokesman.com (208) 758-0260

Courtney Huffaker remembers hitting the pavement. Jesyca Baber doesn't.

Both women were hospitalized with broken bones after falling about 25 feet from a downtown Coeur d'Alene rooftop Saturday night.

Huffaker, 22, was released Wednesday from Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. Her back fractured in several spots and three bones shattered in her wrist. A concussion required seven stitches.

"I'm doing a lot better," she said.

Baber, 30, broke her back, both feet and her right arm - around 40 fractures in all - and isn't expected to walk for a couple more weeks, she said from her room at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane.

She said she feels lucky to have survived. "I definitely have an angel looking out for me."

The two women said they and a friend, Jordan Brennan, went up on the roof of the building at 416 E. Sherman Ave. to watch people on the street below.

Around 9:45 p.m., as they sat on a decorative cap on the parapet, the cap gave way and crashed to the sidewalk below.

"We weren't messing around or anything like that," Huffaker said. "We weren't up there for more than a minute, and the whole thing fell off. It was crazy."

She continued, "We looked down and we felt it kind of roll forward, and then that was when we felt it break. We all tried to grab onto the building, and that was when the whole thing really fell off. ... It just disintegrated."

Huffaker said she alone remained conscious through the ordeal.

"There were people everywhere, because it was Saturday night in Coeur d'Alene," she said.

Next door at Cricket's Restaurant and Oyster Bar, customers sitting outside rushed to help.

"People instantly swarmed to help us," Huffaker said.

She added, “We were really thankful that we didn’t hurt somebody on the sidewalk, because we could have killed somebody, you know.”

All three were taken to Kootenai Health, and Huffaker then was flown to Harborview.

“With the fractures that I have in my back, it’s going to be a long-term kind of recovery that I’m going to have,” she said.

As for her wrist break, “They said that’s really going to be the more painful one, because I pretty much shattered it,” she said.

“I’m thankful I’m alive,” Huffaker said.

Brennan suffered a concussion and broken arm and was released from Kootenai Health.

Baber, who works next door at Kaiju Sushi & Spirits, said sometimes she just goes up on the roof at Cricket’s and the adjoining building “to get away.”

“We weren’t trying to cause any trouble or anything,” she said. “We were going to get up and leave when it collapsed.”

Huffaker said, “We weren’t horsing around up there or anything like that. We were literally up there for no more than a minute. There’s really no reason it should have broke the way it did.”

John McLeod, the building’s owner, told Coeur d’Alene police he wanted to pursue trespassing charges against the three. On Wednesday, McLeod said that has yet to be determined.

“I’m really sorry to hear they were hurt,” he said. “It’s a tragic situation, for sure. They were in a place they shouldn’t have been doing something they shouldn’t have been doing, and they paid a terrible price for it.”