



Daily Herald Photos/Brian Winter

Matthew Bailey, new general manager of Sundance, explains how he dug his wife and daughter out of the snow after an avalanche swept through their Sundance home Thursday

morning. Below, Bailey holds his bloody hands together before having stitches put in them at Utah Valley Regional Medical Center in Provo Thursday.

By **PAT CHRISTIAN**
The Daily Herald

Matthew Bailey heard it.

Then he saw it.

And he felt the horror.

"I was never so frightened in my life."

Bailey said Thursday after an **avalanche** came crashing down through the kitchen of their **Sundance** cabin.

The **avalanche** plunged down a ravine around 8 a.m., sliding toward the Baileys' home.

As new general manager of the ski resort in Provo Canyon, Bailey normally would have been off to work by 8 a.m.

But on Thursday, Bailey was late and outside digging his car out from the storm that dropped nearly two feet of snow in North Fork.

"I heard like a branch cracking, and I looked up on the hill above the house and saw this plume of snow coming down the hill," said Bailey, 39.

Part of the plume wafted around his feet, and he said the **avalanche** shoved a neighbor's car against his.

He saw snow heading for the carport and kitchen where his wife, Carla, 29, and 4-year-old daughter, Lauren, were eating breakfast.

Frantic for the safety of his family, Bailey ran to the house, oblivious to the snow still moving under his feet.

Inside the kitchen, Carla looked out the window and saw her husband running.

"I just remember Matt running for the house and it was just a split second after that and it came through the window," she said.

"There was noise at point of impact, then it was quiet," Bailey said.



It was so ironic.

Ten days earlier, Matthew had been working on a warm beach in Hawaii on an island located between Maui and Molokai.

"I have spent the last 14 years managing a beach-front resort on the island of Lanai," he said, adding that he hasn't skied since his college days.

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Somewhere, buried underneath the confusing mess of snow and debris was his wife and daughter.

"When I first came into the house I had never been so frightened in my life," Bailey said.

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"I was concerned that she was going to suffocate, that was my first concern.

"There was some relief when I heard my wife, but she was buried and it all came crashing down when she told me my daughter was buried."

Carla and Lauren were buried under snow and also under the kitchen table.

"We were lucky the kitchen table was pushed over us and so the snow was not too deep," Carla said later.

Bailey started digging his wife out bare-handed.

Finally freeing her, the frantic couple began searching for their daughter and noticed a small foot protruding from the snow.

"Can you breathe!" Bailey yelled to his daughter.

Lauren yelled back that she couldn't. Bailey said he thought to himself that

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morning. Below, Bailey holds his bloody hands together before having stitches put in them at Utah Valley Regional Medical Center in Provo Thursday.

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AVALANCHE:

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at least she was alive.

"I saw the blood in the snow and I thought it was from my daughter and I was terrified," he said.

He thought his daughter might be critically injured.

But unknown to him, the blood in the snow was his own.

When the avalanche crashed through the windows, sharp glass blended with the invading snow.

Bailey was so frantic to find his daughter, he didn't feel the pain from the numerous cuts he was inflicting to himself.

At the hospital, the numerous cuts inflicted by the sharp glass were obvious.

Back at the cabin, Bailey kept digging.

"I just dug down her body until I cleared an air passage by her face and then we continued to dig until we got her out," Bailey said.

He estimates that his wife was buried under the snow from seven to 10 minutes and that his daughter may have been buried 10 to 15 minutes before he could free her.

While Bailey finished digging out his daughter, Carla called authorities and then ran upstairs to the bedroom of their three-year-old son, John.

Amazingly, he had slept through the harrowing experience.

The family was taken to Utah Valley Regional Medical Center in Provo, where emergency room physicians sutured cuts and treated other minor injuries.

At the hospital, Bailey talked publicly about the ordeal, often hesitant because of emotion, yet

lucky to be alive.

He comforted his daughter while doctors administered a stinging shot to help deaden the pain before sewing her up.

Sundance owner Robert Redford telephoned the family while they were still at the hospital.

"Mr. Redford called and was incredibly upset over what had happened to us," Bailey said.

He said Redford was pleased his family was OK and expressed his concern.

Bailey didn't know for sure how much damage there had been to the house, but he said it was clearly not inhabitable after the avalanche.

He was asked if he planned to return after repairs.

"Live in the house? Absolutely not," he said.

"I almost lost my wife and daughter in that avalanche. I don't want to go back," he said.

Bailey can't help but think of what might have happened if the avalanche had occurred after he had freed his car and driven to work. Could his family have dug themselves out?

"God put snow in my driveway for a reason," he said.

The natural disaster hasn't changed the Baileys' feelings about the new job or even living at Sundance — as long as it's somewhere else, far away from a ravine where an avalanche could occur.

Bailey said he has experienced a natural disaster before. The beach resort in Lanai was evacuated when a tidal wave threatened it around 1992. And he said typhoons have brushed by, too. He also was in the 1971 earthquake that struck Los Angeles.

"I guess disasters follow me around," he joked.