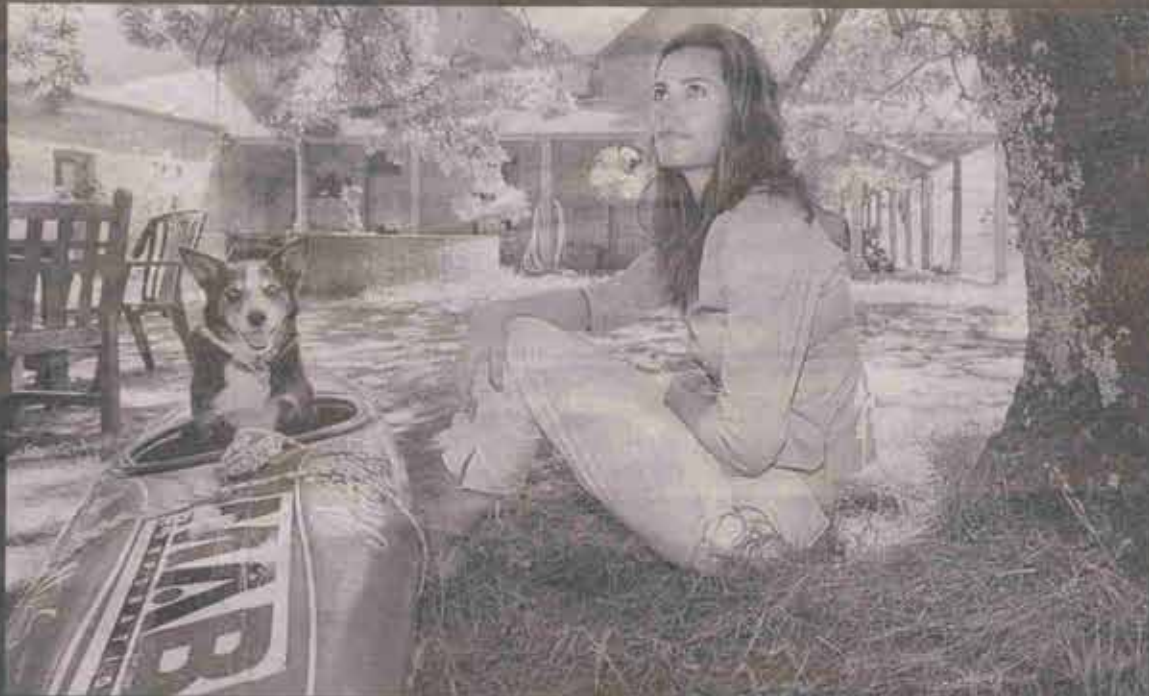




Trekker rescued from crevasse



Soon together: Julia Bland will fly out to join her rescued husband, Peter (above left). Picture: NICOLE CLEARY

THE wife of Victorian adventurer Peter Bland will fly to Chile this morning to join her injured husband after news of his rescue came yesterday, after two days trapped in a crevasse in Antarctica.

Julia Bland said her husband suffered a fractured skull and ribs, brain trauma and a dislocated hip when he fell into the crevasse in sub-zero temperatures during an avalanche four days ago.

Family members, including Mr Bland's mother and brother, yesterday gathered at the family's home at New Gisborne, anxiously awaiting more news of the rescue effort.

Mrs Bland, who was yesterday making arrangements for her trip to Punta Arenas, on the southern tip of Chile, said her husband was a "pretty hardy sort of guy".

The couple, who met as teenagers, have been married three years and have a 10-month-old daughter, Olivia.

Mr Bland's mother, Jane, described her son as a "terrifically gutsy" man. "He's very much in my thoughts," she said.

Mrs Bland said her husband's partner on the polar trek, Melbourne man Jay Watson,

By KYLIE SMITH

radioed support yacht *Tooluka* after the avalanche.

The yacht sent three crew members to trek 11 km inland to help pull him from the crevasse.

It took four attempts over 24 hours before a Chilean chopper was able to lift Mr Bland out of the area.

Mrs Bland said she received a phone call at 1am yesterday to say her husband had been taken by helicopter to a Chilean Antarctic base.

He was conscious and able to speak to her, but sounded groggy, she said.

She said three attempts to airlift him from the area failed because of high altitude, bad weather and a lack of appropriate winching equipment.

Mrs Bland said a plane would be sent from Punta Arenas to bring Mr Bland to a hospital there, where she hoped to be reunited with him.

She said the Chilean Government and several ships in the area had offered help with the rescue effort.

Mrs Bland said she was not concerned

when her husband left for Antarctica just after Christmas because he and Mr Watson had spent a year preparing for the trek.

She said the accident was bad luck and her husband would be disappointed that he had failed in the attempt to cross the Antarctic Peninsula.

It is believed the pair were 11 km short of completing the crossing when the avalanche struck.

Mr Watson was yesterday reported to be continuing the trek towards Charlotte Bay, where he would be picked up by the *Tooluka*.

Mr Bland and Mr Watson, both 32, set off from Hope Bay on January 12 in what was described as a world-first crossing of the Antarctic Peninsula.

The *Tooluka*, with Mr Watson's brother Andrew on board, was originally due to pick up the two men on Friday when they completed the trek.

Instead, the yacht acted as a support base while the four crew members trekked inland for the rescue.

Herald Sun, Monday, February 19, 2001

Antarctic trekker home safe



ANTARCTIC adventurer Peter Bland, nearly killed in a crevasse fall on the icy continent two weeks ago, returned home to Melbourne yesterday.

Mr Bland, 32, spent 40 hours at the bottom of a crevasse on the Antarctic Peninsula after he was caught in the path of an avalanche just 10 metres from his tent.

He and his teammate, Jay Watson, were just 8km short of achieving their goal of successfully making the first unsupported crossing of the Antarctic Peninsula when the accident happened on January 30.

Mr Bland broke five ribs and injured

After his rescue, he spent another week at the Chilean Antarctic base before the weather eased to allow him to be flown to a military hospital at Punta Arenas, in Chile, on February 8.

Yesterday Mr Bland, from New Gisborne, north-west of Melbourne, finally returned to his home in a wheelchair, accompanied by his wife Julia, 30, and 10-month-old daughter Olivia.

"I feel great. It's great to be home," he said on his arrival at Melbourne Airport.

Trekking partner Jay Watson, who had absolved into the crevasse to stay with his teammate until help arrived, was there to

