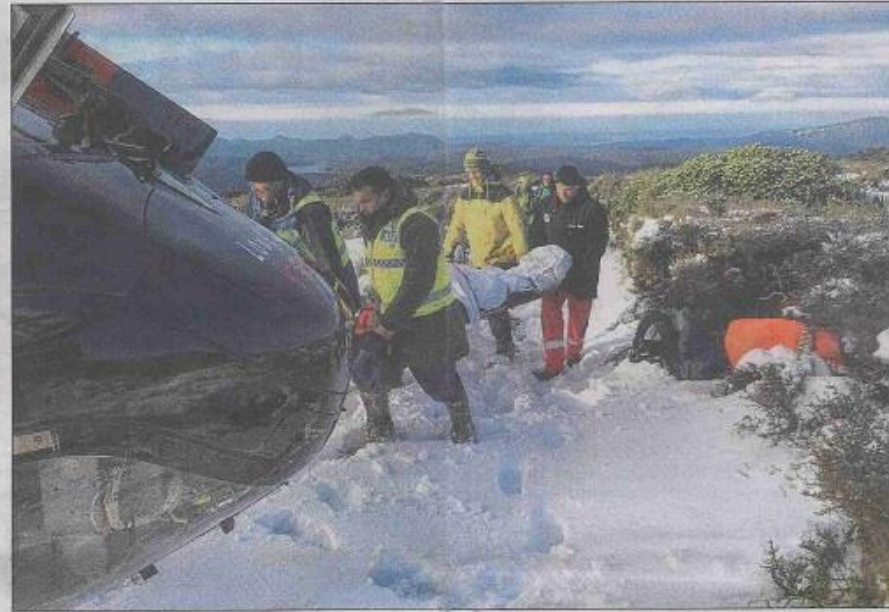




RIGHT: Wairoa police constables Winiata Hamlin (left) and Johnny Yuile (right) were part of the team that rescued a local couple after a freezing night spent on a mountain at Lake Waikaremoana.

LEFT: Wairoa couple Richard and Joy Senior, pictured on a cycling adventure last year, were rescued during a tramp at Lake Waikaremoana on the weekend.



# Rescued after night in snow

A WELL-KNOWN local man was still recovering in hospital yesterday after he and his wife spent a freezing night on Mount Manuoha at Lake Waikaremoana.

Richard and Joy Senior had intended to climb the 1400m peak on Saturday, spend the night in the hut and return the following day. However, snow melting off trees led to hypothermia taking hold for Mr Senior and he was unable to make the final few hundred metres to the hut.

Wairoa area search and rescue controller and Tuai Senior Police Constable Tony Maultsaid said the couple were able to make a call for help from a cellphone just

before 7.30pm and the mission was initially handled by Bay of Plenty rescuers. But with attempts to get a helicopter to the site hampered by poor weather, it was decided to attempt the rescue from the Wairoa side.

"We made the call to the Lowe Rescue Helicopter team who came and picked up two Search and Rescue members from here and headed up to the lake around 1am in the morning," said Constable Maultsaid.

"But due to the weather conditions about a mile out, they had to turn back. At 6.30am they were set to go again but had to stand down for another hour or so due to southerly

gusts. Finally we were able to get in there and pick them up."

Meanwhile, Mr and Mrs Senior had spent the night huddled in their sleeping bags amid the snow on the track. They were discovered by trampers who had spent the night at Manuoha Hut and were heading off early on their walk.

"They were able to get them into dry gear and sleeping bags and it was about 45 minutes later that the helicopter arrived," said Mr Maultsaid.

"Mr Senior was suffering severe hypothermia at that point, all started by the snow melting and dripping on to their heads, clothing and down their necks. They were just 400 or 500 metres from the hut but he had got to

a point where he just couldn't go any further."

The helicopter took the couple to Wairoa Hospital. Mr Senior, 70, was still recovering in hospital yesterday but his wife was discharged after treatment.

Mrs Senior said the experience had been frustrating as she was sure the hut wasn't too much further, but was reluctant to leave her husband.

Knowing a ground crew could not get to them and they would have to wait for a helicopter was also "a bit disheartening".

She said she would put the ordeal down as a learning experience and praised the efforts of the rescue team and the trampers who found them.

WORD quickly spread around town about their incident and their successful rescue.

Mr Senior is a scientist as well as a celebrant and stalwart of the Wairoa Little Theatre. Mrs Senior is a clinical nurse specialist diabetes at Wairoa Hospital.

The couple embarked on an eight-week cycling adventure in February last year, biking from Bluff to Cape Reinga. They shared their story over three instalments in The Wairoa Star.