

# ALLIVE

The Story of the Andes Survivors

by Piers  
Paul  
Read



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Lost in the vast snowy wastes of the high Andes . . . all official rescue efforts abandoned . . . no food . . . inadequate clothing for subzero temperatures . . . no medical supplies to ease the suffering of the dying. So began a terrible ordeal for the young men and women who had set out from Uruguay in high spirits for a series of rugby matches in Chile. Their chartered airplane had entered a cloudbank, lost altitude in a series of downdrafts, and crashed into a mountain peak.

The Fairchild had carried five crewmen and forty passengers. Some were killed instantly. But those who survived clung to life with extraordinary tenacity and ingenuity. They formed themselves into an ordered society, distributing tasks according to individual skills and degrees of physical fitness. Leaders emerged who had never been leaders before.

Realizing that what little chance they had to live lay in their own hands, they planned their escape. Rather than die of starvation, they made a difficult decision: they would use the bodies of their dead companions for food. They were still to endure unexpected and terrible hardships, and one unforeseen tragedy almost overwhelmed them with despair. Yet they refused to be demoralized, and their determination to save themselves increased by sheer strength of will.

*(Continued on back flap)*

*Front panel photograph by Gian Giacomo, FOA*

*Piers Paul Read*

# ALIVE

*the story of a boy and his dog*

*with illustrations by the author*

*The Story of the*

*J. B. Lippincott Company·Philadelphia & New York*

*Piers Paul Read*

**ALIVE**

*Andes Survivors*

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Also by PIERS PAUL READ

The Upstart

The Processor's Daughter

Monk Dawson

The J linkers

Game in Heaveii with 'Fussy Marx

We decided that this book should be written and the truth known because of the many rumors about what happened in the cordillera. We dedicate this story of our suffering and solidarity to those friends who died and to their parents who, at the time when we most needed it, received us with love and understanding.

Vcdro Algorta, Roberto Canessa, Alfredo Delgado,

Daniel Fernandez, Roberto Francois, Roy Harley,

lose Luis Inciarte, Alvaro Mangino, Javier Methol,

Carlos PA :, Fernando Farrado, Ramon Sabella }

Adolfo St ranch, Eduardo Strauch,

Antonio Viziutin, Gustavo Zcrbino

Montevideo, October 30, 1973

Acknowledgments

In writing this book I was helped by various people— especially by Edward Burlingame of J. B. Lippincott Company, who first suggested that I should write it.

In Montevideo my researches were aided by two Uruguayan journalists. The first was Antonio Mercader, whose assistance was suggested to me by the Committee of the Old Christians, he provided me not only with the complex details of the search for the plane undertaken by the parents but also with invaluable material on the background of the survivors. The second journalist was Eugenio Hintz, who gathered material about what was done by the official agencies of the Uruguayan and Chilean governments. I am also indebted to Rafael Ponce de Leon and Gerard Croiset, Jr., who told me of their roles in the search for the Fairchild; to Pablo Gelsi, who acted as my interpreter; and to Dr. Gilberto Regules, for his advice and friendship.

In London I was helped with the transcription of the tapes and the organization of the considerable material I had

gathered in Uruguay by Georgiana Luke and later, in further research, by Kate Grimond.

I was given a free hand in writing this book by both the publisher and the sixteen survivors. At times I was tempted to fictionalize certain parts of the story because this might have added to their dramatic impact, but in the end I decided that the bare facts were sufficient to sustain the narrative. With the exception of the rendering of some speech in dialogue form, nothing in this book departs from the truth as it was told to me by those involved.

It is to them, finally, that I am most grateful. Everywhere I went in Uruguay I was met by "that intimate courtesy and native grace of manner" which W. H. Hudson encountered in the same country more than a hundred years ago. I found it in the families of those who died, in the families of the survivors, and above all in the survivors themselves, who treated me with a most exceptional warmth, candor, and trust.

When I returned in October 1973 to show them the manuscript of this book, some of them were disappointed by my presentation of their story. They felt that the faith and friendship which inspired them in the cordillera do not emerge from these pages. It was never my intention to underestimate these qualities, but perhaps it would be beyond the skill of any writer to express their own appreciation of what they lived through.

P. P. R.

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