

Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors

By Piers Paul Read

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The #1 *New York Times* bestseller and the true story behind the film: A rugby team resorts to the unthinkable after a plane crash in the Andes.

Spirits were high when the Fairchild F-227 took off from Mendoza, Argentina, and headed for Santiago, Chile. On board were forty-five people, including an amateur rugby team from Uruguay and their friends and family. The skies were clear that Friday, October 13, 1972, and at 3:30 p.m., the Fairchild's pilot reported their altitude at 15,000 feet. But one minute later, the Santiago control tower lost all contact with the aircraft. For eight days, Chileans, Uruguayans, and Argentinians searched for it, but snowfall in the Andes had been heavy, and the odds of locating any wreckage were slim.

Ten weeks later, a Chilean peasant in a remote valley noticed two haggard men desperately gesticulating to him from across a river. He threw them a pen and paper, and the note they tossed back read: "I come from a plane that fell in the mountains . . ."

Sixteen of the original forty-five passengers on the F-227 survived its horrific crash. In the remote glacial wilderness, they camped in the plane's fuselage, where they faced freezing temperatures, life-threatening injuries, an avalanche, and imminent starvation. As their meager food supplies ran out, and after they heard on a patched-together radio that the search parties had been called off, it seemed like all hope was lost. To save their own lives, these men and women not only had to keep their faith, they had to make an impossible decision: Should they eat the flesh of their dead friends?

A remarkable story of endurance and determination, friendship and the human spirit, *Alive* is the dramatic bestselling account of one of the most harrowing quests for survival in modern times.

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Editorial Review

Review

“A classic in the literature of survival.” —*Newsweek*

“Read has risen above the sensational and managed a book of real and lasting value.” —*Rolling Stone*

“[Read] records a despair so real it seeps through the pages, while the narrative rarely pushes an image of straightforward heroism. These are recognisable human beings, not saints: peevish, petulant, prone to feuds, rage and selfishness. It makes their survival all the more moving, but what lingers are the moments of ingenuity, and the resilience of the human spirit.” —*The Guardian*

“Read’s style is savage: unliterary, undecorated as a prosecutor’s brief. . . . *Alive* is thunderous entertainment: I know the events by rote, nonetheless I found it electric. And important. *Alive* should be read by sociologists, educators, the Joint Chiefs of Staff. By anyone, in fact, whose business it is to prepare men for adversity.” —*The New York Times*

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About the Author

Piers Paul Read, third son of poet and art critic Sir Herbert Read, was born in 1941, raised in North Yorkshire, and educated by Benedictine monks at Ampleforth College. After studying history at Cambridge University, he spent two years in Germany, and on his return to London, worked as a subeditor on the *Times Literary Supplement*. His first novel, *Game in Heaven with Tussy Marx*, was published in 1966. His fiction has won the Hawthornden Prize, the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize, the Somerset Maugham Award, and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Two of his novels, *A Married Man* and *The Free Frenchman*, have been adapted for television and a third, *Monk Dawson*, as a feature film. In 1974, Read wrote his first work of reportage, *Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors*, which has since sold five million copies worldwide. A film of *Alive* was released in 1993, directed by Frank Marshall and starring Ethan Hawke. His other works of nonfiction include *Ablaze*, an account of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl; *The Templars*, a history of the crusading military order; *Alec Guinness: The Authorised Biography*, and *The Dreyfus Affair*. Read is a fellow and member of the Council of the Royal Society of Literature and a member of the Council of the Society of Authors. He lives in London.

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