

# Crash Victims Stranded In Andes Rugby Team and Followers Survive

Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors, by Piers Paul Read. A social-psychological analysis by Cecilia Hamilton, Alla Leever, and Scott Campbell, edited by Eleanor Hall. (This analysis is based on papers written for Psychology 417.)

On October 13, 1972, a chartered plane left Montevideo, Argentina, carrying a rugby team, its supporters, their friends, relatives, and fellow students, and a few extra passengers. They were bound for a rugby game and a short vacation in Chile. A few hours later, the plane crashed in a remote, snowcovered area high in the Andes. The survival of the crash victims for seventy days is one of the most amazing accounts of our times. It is a splendid example of the processes involved in leadership in the emergence of new norms within a group, in stratification, in cooperation, as well as in conformity and obedience.

Immediately after the crash there was a tendency for leadership to reside in those who had been leaders previously. This could have been expected in light of Homans' theory. He asserts that if obedience to a leader's orders has brought success and net reward in the past, there is a tendency for him to be obeyed in the present. The crew of the plane was probably the flatural place to look to for leadership. But the pilot was dead and the copilot seriously injured.

The other person who had previously exercised leadership was Marcelo Perez. He was the captain of the rugby team. Presumably, since rugby is described as requiring directed group effort and since this rugby team was a highly successful one, the members of the team had gained a net reward through obeying Marcelo in the past. Homans would predict that they would tend to obey him after the crash. And they did.

Marcelo Perez formulated plans for immediate survival and gave orders to put them into effect. He was optimistic about their eminent rescue and his main concern was to take care of the immediate needs of the crash survivors. He ordered the interior of the plane to be cleared and prepared for habitation. He gathered the available food supplies and determined the food rationing system. His orders were carried out and the group felt more comfortable and more secure as a result of his leadership. His contribution to the group was valuable and for the time being he remained the undisputed leader.

### Cannibalism?

His leadership did not remain effective for long, however. His optimism and hope for rescue sustained the group for a time in spite of the scepticisms of a small group of pessimists. But by the ninth day this optimism was fading. Yet Perez reluctant to eat the bodies of the dead, still insisting that it was best to wait for rescue. By the tenth day the group was turning against him. He no longer seemed effective in helping them to survive. The rewards of following him were decreasing, as Homans would put it. The crushing blow came when it was heard by radio that official search efforts had been canceled. The "platform" which he stood for was no longer valid. "His role as their leader became empty and automatic and the life went

out of his eyes." On the seventeenth day he died in an avalanche.

It was not then, however, that other leaders began to emerge. It was evident long before Perez's falling from authority that certain individuals were to be more influential. Among them were Robert Canessa, Nando Parrado, the Strauch cousins and Danile Fernandez (a cousin of the Strauch's). Unlike Perez, these individuals, who made up the ranks of the "pessimists", were seen as able to face the situation as it really was. In particular, Fito Strauch and Canessa had played leading roles in the group's agonizing decision to eat the bodies of their companions who had been killed in the crash. The others looked to these seemingly stronger members for answers.

A major source of leadership was the cousins Eduardo and Fito Strauch and Daniel Fernandez. None of them were members of the rugby team. Their connection with the team seemed to be only in Eduardo's friendship with Marcelo Perez, and Fito's with Roy Harley, another team member. It seemed that their leadership was in no part due to a past history of successful leadership with this group. Therefore their influence must have derived from their behavior after the crash.

Fito Strauch very early showed useful to the group. He was the one who devised a method of melting snow into water and of using the seat cushions as snow shoes. Later he found a way to fashion sunglasses for protection against the snow's glare.

So the group came to view Fito as having good ideas and sound judgement. Fito's relationship with his cousins reinforced his leader's role and he reinforced theirs. These three cousins were the only subgroup of friends and relatives that remained intact among the survivors. Their closeness gave them an advantage over the others. They were better able to withstand the psychological stresses of the situation.

### Team Leaders

Their individual qualities were also mutually compensatory. Fito was inventive and his faith in their ultimate rescue was sustaining for the group. But he was also temperamental. Daniel Fernandez balanced this with consistent calm, reason, and fairness. But he lacked physical strength and assertiveness. Eduardo Strauch filled this lack. He is described as bossy. But he was also kind to the younger, weaker boys. These three together could fulfill several different aspects of the leader's role. They could provide task leadership and psychological support, reduce tensions in the group, and if necessary demonstrate intimidation.

During the days that followed Fito and Eduardo Strauch and Daniel Fernandez performed the most unpleasant task of cutting the flesh of their companions' bodies. The power of the Strauch cousins was all the more effective since they possessed the most important resource in the group.

Their ability to provide food to their companions was synonymous with life itself.

As the cousins exercised leadership the survivors found they gained a net reward from following them. They became more and more firmly entrenched as leaders as the group became more and more likely to obey them.

When hope of rescue was completely gone, plans began to crystallize for an expedition to civilization, and the expeditionaries became the elites of the group. They were chosen on the basis of physical fitness and their greatest chances to survive the rigorous trials of an expedition through the Andes. They were pampered in every respect. They did not have to work, they were provided with all the food they could eat, and their every whim was fulfilled. Everything was done to build up their health and strength for the expedition which would take place later in the spring when the snow would have melted somewhat.

### Expeditionaries

The relationship between the expeditionaries and the rest of the survivors seemed to have been a straight forward example of Homans' exchange theory, which describes social behavior in quasi-economic terms. The reward for the group was that the only way they could be rescued was if the expeditionaries contacted the outside world and sent them aid. The rewards for the expeditionaries were that they received extra food they were not required to do any of the work, and everyone strove to keep their morale high. The costs to the group were the depletion of the food supply, the extra work they had to do and the subordination of their emotional needs to those of the expeditionaries. The cost to the expeditionaries was the discomfort, exertion and danger of the expedition itself.

Yet in spite of the difficulties, the expedition was a success. After a ten-day journey through the mountains, Nando Parrado and Robert Canessa met some Chilean peasants who contacted government authorities. The remaining survivors were rescued by helicopter.

Upon the return to civilization all members of the surviving group became heroes. A new type of leadership became essential. The ability to cut human flesh was not important any more. However to convey the group's experiences in the mountains required eloquence. It was thus that Pancho Delgado the scapegoat of the group rose to the rank of greatest prominence.

In a press conference, Delgado was able to justify to the world the group's difficult decision to eat the bodies of those who had been killed in the crash and in the later avalanche. Delgado's companions did not develop greater fondness for him. It seems likely that the reason for their dislike of Delgado might lie in the fact that they felt that Delgado contributed little to the group's survival in the mountain and yet was reaping disproportionate honor and recognition after their return.

## Finals Schedule

Classes for the Spring Term 1974 will officially end Wednesday, May 22. Final examinations will be held on the succeeding two days according to the schedule below.

Students are reminded that the final examination is in integral part of the course, and failure to attend could result in the student's failing the entire course, regardless of the quality of the course work submitted before that date. In accordance with section 0-4 of the Senate Regulations, "A student who is absent from a final examination for a cogent reason may have his grade deferred upon the authorization of the Director of the Commonwealth Campus at which the student is enrolled."

The Senate Regulations also provide in Section 0-8 that "Any student with two or more final examinations at the same time should file a conflict of examination at the time and place specified in advance by the instructor for the course." Any student with three or more exams on the same day may file a similar request, and conflict examinations will be arranged if feasible.

### THURSDAY, MAY 23

Course	Section	Room	Instructor
8:30-9:50 a.m.			
Anthy 45		N8	Kolb
Chem 13		B101	Balmer
Chem 33		B120	Chisholm
Ed Psy 14		B124	Tauber
E Mch 810		N111	Zakrzewski
Engl 195		T204	Chiteman
Psy 101		B121	Mizusawa
10:00-11:50 a.m.			
C Lit 103		B113	Eilenberger
Engl 1	3	T206	Hilinski
Engl 3	6,7	B101	Horne
Ent 2		B123	Jubb
Fr 307		N113	Hovanyecz
Mktg 122	1,2	Reed Lect.	Hemberger
ME 807		N111	Zakrzewski
Psy 417		B117	Hall
1:00-2:50 p.m.			
Biol 13	1,2,3	Reed Lect.	Cunningham
Fr 31		N113	Hovanyecz
G Sc 2-21		B101	Tucker
G Sc 303		B101	Tucker
Ger 3		B114	Eilenberger
Psy 431		B121	Mizusawa
3:00-4:50 p.m.			
Anthy 1		N8	Kolb
EE 52		B117	Pierce
E Mch 13		N116	Wilson
Math 71	1,2	B101	Chung
PI Sc 1	1,2	Reed Lect.	Yena
RI St 4		B113	Frankforter

### FRIDAY, MAY 24

Course	Section	Room	Instructor
8:00-9:50 a.m.			
Acctg. 201		B123	Monahan
Biol 22	1,2	N8	Eckroat
E Mch 811		N112	Grode
Engl 133	1	N111	Scott
Engl 133	2	N114	Small
Soc 19		T204	Barnett
10:00-11:50 a.m.			
Phys 201	1,2	N8	Foote
Phys 203, 204		B113	Scott
Phys 237		B118	Baker
PI Sc 14		B123	Yena
1:00-2:50 p.m.			
Acctg 806		B123	Monahan
Biol 12	1,2	N8	Masteller
Biol 496		N113	Cunningham
IE 811		N112	Grode
ME 22		B118	Zakrzewski
Meteo 300-303		B101	Baker
Ph Sc 7	1,2	Reed Lect.	Hagenbuch

## Chiricuzio Talks

(Continued from Page 1)

all the years that I've known and it would be such an instrumental tool to use on the SGA, so many things you learn by experience...the SGA is my love.

Q. That's a good attitude for an SGA president to have. Anything that deals with people. I believe it's important to have a love for it. I know I love what I'm doing now—interviewing people and finding out how they feel about things. But in light of everything you've said, what advice could or would you give the new officers?

A. I'd say work hand-in-hand with Dean Lane and your new advisor whoever that's going to be. If things don't go well, I hope the students demand a candidate...Between Paul and Brian I hope Brian will choose to run for some position on SGA because he's got valuable information...and Paul (Seifer)...Paul's a good man...he knows you can't snow students although it's happened, huh?

Q. What do you think of Behrend students?

A. They communicated this year...People are together...it is a haven here...

Q. Do you think Behrend students are the average type of college student?

A. I can't answer that...I really can't...I haven't seen much change, on the whole the Behrend student is politically unaware. Maybe it's not an important thing for them so they don't bother...I don't know...it's a hard question...my opinion is from what I've seen they're not average people.

Q. What advice would you offer the Behrend student?

A. Get involved. Communicate. I think the thing I would advise Behrend students to do is to come back and stay here. Be here for four years if they can. The tone and tradition of the students is set by those students who have been here and that's how you develop a college. It's been a definite experience that I would never have missed...Behrend needs growth and the only way it's going to get it is if the students keep pumping their bodies back here and keep taking classes here.

Q. I'm glad I decided to stay.

A. And I'm glad too.

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