

Group Operations & Management



DELTA STATE



WELCOME TO
THE FINGER OF GOD

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Turboprop Fairchild FH-227D took off on October 12, 1972 from Montevideo, Uruguay heading towards it's destination in Santiago, Chile. Due to bad weather the captain had to stop mid trip and continue the trip the next day.

The Old Christians Club Rugby Union team from Montevideo, Uruguay were passengers on the Fairchild, along with their friends, family, associates, and several other people. Along with the crew there were a total of 45 people.



October 13, 1972

- On Friday the 13th the “Fairchild” crashed in the Andes Mountains at over 3,600 meters altitude.
- There were high winds and the sky was extremely cloudy.
- The pilot thought they were further then they actually were and began to bring the plane down.
- He hit a peak and took the right wing off, then hit another peak which took the left wing off, leaving only the fuselage in the air.
- A propeller sliced through the fuselage and when it all finally hit the ground, the fuselage slid down a mountain and came to a stop in a snow bank.
- A total of 12 passengers, more than ¼, died during the crash, and several more died quickly after due to injuries and the freezing weather.



Dr. Francisco Nicola died during the crash, but he brought along two medical students with him who survived. They were able to improvise splints for the injured from different parts of the plane.

By the next morning 5 more people died.

Adolfo "Fito" Strauch made sunglasses for some of the survivors made out of the sun visors he found in the pilots cabin.

- There were search parties from 3 different countries, but after 8 days and no success the search was cancelled. The white plane blended in with the white snow.
- On the 11th day Roy Harley, one of the passengers, heard over the radio that the search had cancelled.

“The others who had clustered around Roy, upon hearing the news, began to sob and pray, all except Parrado, who looked calmly up the mountains which rose to the west. Gustavo [Coco] Nicolich came out of the plane and, seeing their faces, knew what they had heard... [Nicolich] climbed through the hole in the wall of suitcases and rugby shirts, crouched at the mouth of the dim tunnel, and looked at the mournful faces which were turned towards him. 'Hey boys,' he shouted, 'there's some good news! We just heard on the radio. They've called off the search.' Inside the crowded plane there was silence. As the hopelessness of their predicament enveloped them, they wept. 'Why the hell is that good news?' Paez shouted angrily at Nicolich. 'Because it means,' [Nicolich] said, 'that we're going to get out of here on our own.' The courage of this one boy prevented a flood of total despair.”

-Piers Paul Read from his book “Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors”

Food

After searching everything all the survivors found were a few chocolate bars, assorted snacks, and several bottles of wine. They split it all up evenly and ate small rations, but knew it wouldn't last long.

Fito came up with a way to make the snow melt for water for them. He used metal from the seats, placed it in the snow, the sun would melt it and it would drip into the empty wine bottles.

There was no vegetation or animals around for food. They tried to find hay in the chairs to eat, but were unsuccessful. They also tried eating the leather off the luggage, but knew it was too risky since there were no health benefits.

After searching the fuselage over and over and finding nothing the survivors agreed to eat the dead, starting with the pilot.



All the survivors were Roman Catholic. Some compared the act of cannibalism to the ritual of Holy Communion in order to convince themselves they weren't doing anything wrong. Others however waited several more days until they knew they had no other option and were desperate.

October 29, 1972

- 8 more people died.
- While they were sleeping an avalanche came down.
- They were stuck in the fuselage for 3 days because it was buried under all the snow.
- Nando Parrado was able to poke a hole in the roof for air.





The strongest three: Nando Parrado, Roberto Canessa, and Antonio Vizintin set off nearly 7 weeks after the crash on a hike to try and find civilization. Knowing that Chili was to the West they planned on heading in that direction. There was a mountain in the way so they had to travel East instead, and hoped to find an area with a U-turn and end up going in the West direction.



- Several hours after the trio began their journey they found the tail of the plane which held some suitcases containing: cigarettes, candy, clean clothes, and comic books.
- They decided to camp out at the tail that night.
- After the 2nd night they realized how cold it was and that it would be too difficult to survive without protection, they went back to get the radio to hook up to the battery on the tail and try to get more service.
- After several days of trying and being unsuccessful they gave up and returned to the fuselage.

December 12, 1972

- The trio began a new journey, this time West to go over the mountain.
- Nando Parrado led the way.
- The thin air made it twice as hard for them to climb the mountain.
- To shelter themselves from the freezing nights they had a three person sleeping bag Carlitos Paez made for them out of the insulation they took from the tail of the plane.



- On the 3rd day they finally reached the top of the mountain; the border of Argentina and Chile.
- They still had to go through the Red Valley of Chile.
- Began to run out of food: sent Antonio Vizintin back to the fuselage, who made a sled and rode down the mountain, it took him 1 hour to get back.
- Several days later they arrived at the bed of Rio Azufre.
- After following the river they reached the end of the snowline.
- Started noticing signs of civilization: signs of camping, then saw cows on the 9th day.
- They stopped for Roberto Canessa to rest for the night and Nando Parrado went to get wood to build a fire.
- Canessa saw a man on a horse, then three.
- The river made it difficult to communicate so the man told them he would be back the next day.

The next day the man brought a loaf of bread along with paper and a pencil that he tied to a rock, and he passed it over the river to them. When Parrado passed the note back the man. The man, Sergio Catalan, went and got help and later came back to get them.



- The Army came and made Parrado go into a helicopter with them to show where the crash and other survivors were located at.
- The weather was bad and the helicopters were only able to take 6 of the survivors back that day, but a medical and rescue team were left with the last 8 survivors.

December 23, 1972

- At daybreak helicopters arrived to bring the final 8 survivors back.
- They were all taken to hospitals in Santiago, Chile and treated for: altitude sickness, dehydration, frostbite, broken bones, scurvy, and malnutrition.
- Every year on the anniversary all the survivors get together to celebrate the life they have been blessed with.



**Thank you and
God Bless Nigeria**

