



# I Had to Survive: How a Plane Crash in the Andes Inspired My Calling to Save Lives

By Roberto Canessa, Pablo Vierci

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## **I Had to Survive: How a Plane Crash in the Andes Inspired My Calling to Save Lives** By Roberto Canessa, Pablo Vierci

On October 13, 1972, an Uruguayan air force plane carrying members of the Old Christians rugby team—and many of their friends and family members—crashed in the Andes mountains. *I Had to Survive* offers a gripping and heartrending recollection of the harrowing brink-of-death experience that propelled survivor Roberto Canessa to become one of the world's leading pediatric cardiologists.

As he tended to his wounded teammates amidst the devastating carnage, rugby player Roberto Canessa, a second-year medical student at the time, realized that no one on earth was luckier: he was alive—and for that, he should be eternally grateful. As the starving group struggled beyond the limits of what seemed possible, Canessa played a key role in safeguarding his fellow survivors, eventually trekking with a companion across the hostile mountain range for help.

No one could have imagined that there were survivors from the accident in such extreme conditions. Canessa's extraordinary experience on the fine line between life and death became the catalyst for the rest of his life.

This uplifting tale of hope and determination, solidarity and ingenuity, gives vivid insight into the world-famous story that inspired the movie *Alive!* Canessa also draws a unique and fascinating parallel between his work as a doctor diagnosing very complex congenital cardiopathies in unborn and newborn infants and the difficult life-changing decisions he was forced to make in the Andes. With grace and humanity, Canessa prompts us to ask ourselves: what do you do when all the odds are stacked against you?

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**I Had to Survive: How a Plane Crash in the Andes Inspired My Calling to Save Lives** By Roberto Canessa, Pablo Vierci Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #178122 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-03-01
- Released on: 2016-03-01
- Format: Kindle eBook

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