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When Pablo Escobar first began to process cocaine paste, turning it into a drug which could be "sold on the street," he did so in the city of Medellín. This photo, by Jose Duque, depicts a view of Medellín, Colombia's second-largest city. [License: CC BY 2.0](#)

Not only did Escobar have great charisma, he put that charisma to great use. People loved and respected him. He was also true to his word, which meant a great deal to many people. His brother, Roberto, says:

*Pablo would accomplish whatever he told you, just as if it was scripture.* (From interview included in "Pablo Escobar's Private Archive".)

Since it was impossible for Escobar to do everything himself, how did he run his "business?" For one thing, his cousin and right-hand man—Gustavo de Jesús Gaviria Rivero—was responsible for the enterprise's finances:

*Who owed, who didn't ... Pablo wasn't in charge of that, he would ask how much was his share. Gustavo would tell him, and that was it. They complemented each other very well and worked 24 hours a day. They were charged with dynamism.* (Jaime Gaviria interview, "Pablo Escobar's Private Archive".)

In 1978, Pablo and Gustavo figured-out how to really make their business sizzle. They found a large piece of property in a remote area of central Colombia.

Pablo called the place "Hacienda Napoles." So proud was he, of this accomplishment, that he hired a publicity crew—who flew in by helicopter—to film his new place.

The news made Pablo famous around the world. And ... for those who lived and worked there? It was like being part of royalty.

Real royals, however, are not typically engaged in activities like "money laundering."

During the early part of Pablo's career, members of his family—such as his mother—did not understand the concept of money laundering. She believed that a stream, near her son's Napoles estate, was where the money was "laundered." Later, she learned what money laundering is really all about.

What did Pablo think about laundering money?

*I think that if no dirty money or dollars had entered the country, Columbia would be in a serious economic crisis just like other Latin American countries.* (See "Pablo Escobar's Private Archive," at 17:24.)

Once, in 1985, Pablo's father was kidnapped as he was going to mass. Everyone, including the police, looked for him. Pablo, according to his mother, issued a statement:

*If my father comes back with a single scratch, all the money we'll give you won't be enough to bury all your people.* (From interview included in "Pablo Escobar's Private Archive".)

Roberto says that, as a consequence of the kidnapping, people working for Escobar rounded-up around 500

people in Medellin. Then ... they were effectively put out of business.

Pablo—by this time a very rich man—had become the head of the Medellin drug cartel. The next logical thing, for him, was to get involved with politics.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

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## Media Stream



### Medellin, Colombia

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