

LETTER FROM MEDELLÍN

EVERYONE here knows that if you get shot, run over, or knifed the place to go is the Policlínica, an emergency clinic run by the San Vicente de Paúl Public Hospital: the surgeons and internes who staff it on weekend nights have intensive on-the-job practice and a reputation for performing miracles. Security is tight; there have been instances of frustrated murderers who finished off their victims in the recovery room, so now guards at the entry gate check to see that only the wounded and their relatives or friends go in. Standing at the gate on a recent Saturday at midnight, I watched a man emerge unaccompanied from a taxi, with blood seeping from a large hole in his chest. He could still walk. He needed to, because there are no hospital orderlies to help patients in at the gate, and although I saw five taxis screech to the entrance and deliver five severely wounded men in less than ten minutes, not a single ambulance arrived. Metal stretchers were wheeled out and operated by the victims' friends or relatives, but the man with the chest wound was alone. "How about that?" the gatekeeper said, watching him stagger past. "Maybe he'll survive." He was not being cynical; he knew from experience, he told me, that on weekend nights about ninety such men appear at the Policlínica, and between

twelve and twenty die. Another taxi pulled up, and the driver helped a hysterical woman drag out a young man with a gunshot wound through his back and haul him onto a stretcher. He appeared to be dead. The taxi-driver matter-of-factly mopped up a pool of blood on the back seat and drove away. The driver of the taxi that later took me home explained that picking up wounded passengers is part of the job. "How can we leave someone to die on the street like that?" he asked. "Most of the time, we lose the fares, because those people are in no position to pay, but we do it anyway, out of charity."

On nights like these, one can have the impression that Medellín is about to drown in its own blood. Over the past decade, the level of violence here has risen so far above what is rationally conceivable, even in a country as violent as Colombia, that statistics make no sense: What does it mean, for example, that last year, the most violent in Medellín's history, more than three hundred police officers were killed, along with some three thousand youths between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five, or that in the first two months of this year the rate had increased? When I first came here, in mid-1989, that year was already on record as being the most violent to date; I met a judge, a woman who had become anorexic

because she was receiving constant death threats, and a few weeks later I saw in the papers that she had indeed been killed. Then, there was the radical left's representative on the municipal council—a bustling, courteous man I had also interviewed—who was assassinated in his office by a young man who had walked straight past the security guards. I talked to a man who had survived six attempts on his life and was waiting for the seventh wearing a bulletproof vest, not certain he would make it. The young, highly popular governor of the *departamento* of Antioquia, of which Medellín is the capital, was murdered by a car bomb on his way to work. Things only became worse after the joint United States-Colombia offensive against the drug trade got under way, in August of 1989, and the mood of the *paisas*, as the inhabitants of Antioquia are called, swung from stunned disbelief to a kind of hip cynicism. In the offensive's fourth month, a few weeks before Christmas, the police announced that they had surrounded the most wanted of Colombia's drug traffickers, Pablo Escobar, in one of his many Antioquia country estates, and that his capture was imminent. The general assumption was that he would not be taken alive. That night, I had dinner here with some friends at a restaurant that was unusually crowded and cheerful. "I can't imagine it!" a woman in our

group, a chic and lively socialite, burst out. "I can't imagine a future without Pablo Escobar. I can't understand what it's going to feel like to live without fear, but the mere possibility makes me so happy that I feel like decorating the Christmas tree with little red coffins."

That mood has now passed—swept away by an avalanche of events that did not include Escobar's capture—and has been replaced by a wave of depression and self-doubt that permeates every conversation: How is it that the *paisas*, the proud vanguard of enterprise and innovation, the architects of Colombia's industrial

RESTAURANT SCHOOL

Fresh-Ground Pepper 101



future, the most punctual, God-fearing, and family-bound citizens of an otherwise slapdash country, have come to this? The question has even spawned a new breed, called *violentólogos*—researchers who try to make sense of the madness that has overtaken Antioquia, and who have a hard time just keeping track of who has killed whom. The proliferation of warring groups is staggering: in addition to Escobar's brigades, which continue their attack on the government, there are drug gangs, street gangs, death squads, "militias" (left over from guerrilla groups that passed through Medellín in the mid-nineteen-eighties, now operating on their own), paramilitary squads, and extortion brigades—all of them up in arms against the police and against each other. And now that bizarre truces and deals are being worked out between the central government, in Bogotá, and the illegal traders who have made Medellín the drug capital of the world, an even more sobering question is how the city will cope with a problem that only a short while ago appeared to belong exclusively to the drug trade but currently seems beyond the very considerable abilities of even a Pablo Escobar to control.



Viewed from densely populated hills known as the northeast and northwest *comunas*, the heart of the city—its gleaming white skyscrapers and brick office buildings—seems as remote as Oz. The hillsides are as much Medellín as the bustling, cheerfully venal commercial district in the valley, but not even the citizens of the ghettoized *comunas* see it that way. The "real" Medellín has factories, travel agencies, video stores, and probably more commercial square feet of clothing boutiques than any other city its size. On the hills, the spreading network of improvised housing is mottled with tiny grocery stores, an occasional school or movie house, and, here and there, a church. Half the population of Medellín lives there—about eight hundred thousand people—in brick and concrete houses that may slant a little but are nevertheless stable, with water and electricity that the municipal government has provided to even the most outlying areas. Yet when the people who live in the *comunas* describe their neighborhoods they often say there is nothing there, because there is nothing

there that counts. No wealth, no prestige, no self-respect—only a gnawing resentment of the Medellín of shopping malls and nine-to-five jobs.

This is Pablo Escobar's power base. He was born, in 1949, a little farther uphill, in the misty, densely wooded mountains that surround the Medellín valley, into a family that seems to have been the embodiment of *paisa* pride: a farmer father, and a mother who was a schoolteacher—the kind of folks who keep their farmhouses immaculately whitewashed and then deck the porch with so many pots of hanging orchids and geraniums that the whitewash barely shows through. Of all the stories Escobar might like to tell if

he is ever captured, one of the most fascinating would surely be the account of his transition from respectable farmer's son to small-time hood. Certainly he was imaginative from the first: he found a way to make a living by reselling gravestones he'd stolen from a Medellín cemetery and sanded flat. He was ambitious: in 1982, as soon as he had made enough money from drug trafficking to build up a power base, he got elected to Congress as an alternate representative on the ticket of the Liberal Party. He was also vengeful: his leap to notoriety came in 1984, when he masterminded the assassination of Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, who had exposed Escobar's connections with the cocaine trade and forced him out of office just months before. From that time on, Escobar operated on two fronts: he created what narcotics officials believe was the largest and most efficient individual world network for the production and delivery of cocaine, and he waged a single-minded war against anyone in Colombia who spoke out against the cocaine trade, focussing on the justice system, and on anyone who supported the extradition of traffickers to the United States, where the long arm of corruption could not spring them.

After dozens of political assassinations, and after twenty months of what must be the most determined manhunt ever mounted by the Colombian government, Escobar, although militarily weakened, remains not only at large but in control of most of his business operations—sound evidence of a vast network of loyal supporters. Escobar nurtured that support carefully—with jobs, housing, and interest-free loans



"The Baldwin piano has a rich, warm sound; the tone quality is incomparable . . . a truly elegant instrument in every way."

Marian McPartland



Baldwin

For more information write: Baldwin Piano, P.O. Box 422
Dept. NY 115, Loveland, OH 45140-0310

"MY LOVE"

(AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE)

ACTUAL SIZE

14K yellow gold
pendant
\$469.00

Sterling silver
pendant
\$159.00

14K yellow gold
18" 2mm. solid
rope chain
\$116.00

Sterling silver
18" 2mm. solid
rope chain
\$99.00



#1991

Prices include Shipping & Handling

Send Check or Money Order to:

N.B.A. Inc.
P.O. Box 3677
MDSE Mart
Chicago, Illinois 60654

Telephone:
1-800-426-3730
In Chicago call:
1-312-329-1349

The Adams Family's

Cartwright Hotel

San Francisco



We've transformed our little hotel into a home. Antiques and fresh flowers in every room. Complimentary afternoon tea. One block from Union Square.
\$90 to \$160

(800) 227-3844

524 Sutter at Powell, San Francisco, CA 94102

**WHITE OR
KHAKI**



START FIGHTING SKIN CANCER NOW!
Dermatologists Recommend The Sun Crusher™

The Duckster Sun Crusher™ offers many advantages:

- Wider brim All around. 2 3/4" min. vs 1" on most bucket hats
- **No Exposure At The Temple**, plenty of shade for side of face and back of neck.
- 4" visor-like reinforced front brim with green underside to **Fight Glare**.
- Poly/cotton fabric is **Cool** and absorbent.
- **Stitched eyelets for Ventilation**.
- **Lightweight**.
- **Great Looking**. Traditional look with enough flare to provide **Excellent Protection**.
- **Made by Duckster™**, the quality hat maker, with Duckster's logo embroidered on back of hat.

Color: Traditional Light Khaki with traditional Maroon Club band. Chalk White with traditional Navy Club band.

Sizes: S (6 3/4-6 7/8); M (7-7 1/8); L (7 1/4-7 3/8); XL (7 1/2-7 7/8); XXL (7 3/4-7 7/8)

Price: \$20 + \$2.50 postage & handling per order.

For faster service call (615) 886-5189 with Visa or MC.

To Order send check or MO to:

ANDREW THOMPSON CO.
843 Arden Way, Dept. N
Signal Mountain, TN 37377
Your Satisfaction Guaranteed
Or Your Money Back.



NAGEN-DEWEY
BUY-SELL-APPRAISE

**OLD NAVAJO
TEXTILES**

SINCE 1975
1-800-262-8256
ON THE PLAZA SANTA FE

Camden, Maine

A seacoast village where the mountains meet the sea. Enjoy this magic and beauty at a historic inn offering memorable meals, fine wines and spirits, tennis, sailing, boat cruises or quiet contemplation. Family operated, since 1901.



Whitehall Inn
Box NY, Camden, ME 04843 (207) 236-3391

A MODERN CLASSIC



All-cotton pinpoint oxford, fly front, pleated pockets, full cut, drop-shoulder, removable collar stays. Dress or casual. White, blue, pink, ecru, grey. Made in USA \$99 + \$3 shipping. CA residents add 7% tax. Catalog available.

1-800-772-BLUE

BILLYBLUE SAN FRANCISCO

for the people of the *comunas*. He built on a belief his admirers once shared with almost everyone in Colombia—that drugs were the United States' problem. He exploited the business-loving *paisas'* inability to resist a good deal; there are plenty of people here who have learned to hate him but still cannot be completely persuaded that there is anything wrong with selling merchandise—any merchandise—for which there is a market. Mostly, though, Escobar prospered and survives because through the cocaine boom and his private war he has enabled thousands of dead-end kids to make the leap from the *comunas* to the otherwise inaccessible city beyond.

ALONSO SALAZAR, a slight, mustachioed young man who has about him an air of almost preternatural alertness, is one of the most original of the new *violéntólogos*. He drifted through the faculties of veterinary and journalism schools until someone urged him to collect a series of oral histories he had been taking and turn it into a book. It is called "No Nacimos Pa' Semilla" ("We Weren't Born to Bear Seed"), and it is selling out all over the country, because the oral histories were provided by the *comuna* youths known, variously, as *pistolocos* (crazy guns), *los muchachos de las bandas* (gang members), and simply *sicarios* (hired assassins). Salazar started collecting the boys' stories in 1988, when the extraordinary amount of criminal activity going on in the *comunas* brought them sharply to the "real" city's attention. One series of interviews, with someone he has called Toño, was recorded as the boy was dying of gunshot wounds in a bed at the Policlínica. "He was so bad, so evil," Salazar said to me one afternoon when he and I were sitting in a dusty, garbage-strewn plaza in the northeast *comuna*. "You could almost see him salivate when he told the stories about all the people he'd killed." Still, it makes Salazar sad to think of him, because the boy came to depend on his visits, and was grateful and proud that anyone would think he was important enough to be listened to. It was the same with all the interviews. "To have their lives become a word, a line of text, thrilled them," Salazar said. "They all wanted so badly to find a place in the world."

Salazar isn't baffled anymore by the combination of vulnerability and mur-

derousness in the kids he interviews. The first thing that happened to him when he started out, he says, was that his view of the world turned upside down. Partly, it was because the boys were so nice, so amiable, that he found he couldn't keep the concept of evil in the forefront of his mind as he worked with them; and partly it was because the stories he heard were so similar. There is, it seems, a process at work—a series of events, some known, some still mysterious—that has produced a generation of hopeless suicides, whose particular form of self-destruction happens to be murder. Salazar believes that the first crime wave was partly provoked by the massive economic crisis that hit Medellín in the mid-nineteen-seventies, when the textile factories that were the heart of the city's economy closed down or fired thousands of workers. As it happened, that was also the period when the nascent cocaine trade consolidated into several cartel-like formations, one of them headed by Pablo Escobar. What Salazar still hasn't managed to understand is why these two phenomena coincided with a runaway increase in all forms of violence. Ever since the Conservative-Liberal civil war known as La Violencia came to an end, in the late nineteen-fifties, Medellín had been relatively peaceful. "But suddenly there was a burst of kidnappings," Salazar said. "You could argue that this was the drug trade's way of accumulating working capital, but the number of rapes and homicides also shot up. It seems that the whole society began to shred then." Recent figures show the trend: in 1980, there were 730 violent deaths in Medellín; in 1990, there were 5,300.

The gangs put together by the traffickers went largely unnoticed in the early part of the drug era, because they were used mostly for internal business—collecting bills, eliminating stool pigeons, and so forth. It wasn't until Escobar was drummed out of Congress by Justice Minister Lara Bonilla that the *bandas* acquired a paramilitary structure and a political role. Escobar put a young man named David Ricardo Prisco in charge of Lara's murder. With four of his brothers and several cousins and close friends, he formed a gang known as the Priscos, which was Escobar's most effective terrorist squad for the next six years, which was as long as it lasted. "Thanks to that

murder, the Priscos were the first band to become notorious," Salazar says. "They became the prototype of a series of highly organized bands with close links to the drug lords. Their center was the family, and the barrio, with its network of family relations and loyal friends. A *sicario* from one of the bands could earn as much as twenty million pesos"—about two hundred thousand dollars—"for a single job, buy a luxury condominium in an upper-class neighborhood, and—this is fundamental for people in this culture—provide a better life for his family. At the height of their power, the bands emulated Escobar: they helped out the community with money and public works, and were considered benefactors. In peacetime, they organized street festivals, and they often had a police escort when they rode around the neighborhood."

Since early last year, when the Medellín police underwent a thorough purge of their ranks and a complete overhaul of the high command, they have been waging war on the drug trade, and the department is now fond of providing *organigramas* that show dozens of *bandas* neatly spread out in a series of networks leading straight up to Escobar. Salazar thinks that only about thirty per cent of the Medellín gangs have such formal links to the drug world, and that it's the remaining seventy per cent that are at the heart of the current wave of violence. They are the *chichipatos*, or small-time hoods; the *basuqueros*, or consumers of *basuco*, a highly addictive cocaine derivative; the *punketos*, still devoted to the music of the Sex Pistols and The Clash. What Salazar calls the "countercultural gangs" don't last very long as such, nor do the individual youths who join them. They are somehow free of the middle-class aspirations that gave discipline and structure to the now extinct Priscos and their spinoffs; the Priscos made a pact with destiny which had clearly defined goals—a short life, yes, but, in exchange, a B.M.W. and a penthouse for one's mother, say. The *punketos*' minds are too frayed for such orderly planning. Maybe it has something to do with their distance from the "real" Medellín. The Priscos came from Aranjuez, a well-established working-class neighborhood just up the road from Medellín's main drag. The *desechables*, the throwaway kids, come from much farther uphill. They have

Enter a whole new world of writing pleasure...

Voyager Fountain Pen only \$49⁹⁵*

*But read this ad for an even better deal!

The *Voyager* line of fine pens is equal or superior to the great pens of Europe and America in function and appearance, indistinguishable in heft and feel. The Germanmade two-tone nib of the *Voyager Fountain Pen* is heavily 14-k gold-plated and provided with a silky-smooth iridium tip. Just as those fine European and American pens, *Voyager* pens are tastefully decorated with gold-plated applications and pocket clip.

The truly astonishing thing about the *Voyager Fountain Pen* is the price.

We are the exclusive representatives of these fine writing instruments in the United States. We can therefore bring you this superior fountain pen for just \$49.95. Compare that to the \$150 to \$250 that you would expect to pay for equivalent U.S. or European luxury fountain pens. But we have an even better deal: **Buy two for \$99.90, and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments—absolutely FREE!** The *Voyager* companion retractable ballpoint pen is in the same luxury execution. It costs \$39.95. The "3-for-2" special deal is also available. For further substantial saving, you can buy

the set—Fountain Pen and Ballpoint Pen for only \$69.95. And, of course, you can buy three sets for the price of two. Start writing with what may well be the finest writing instruments in the world, get incredible savings and order your *Voyager Fountain Pen(s)* today!



• The 2-tone nib of the *Voyager* is made in West Germany. It's 14-k gold plated, with a silky-smooth iridium tip.



• The *Voyager Fountain Pen* comes with a dual ink supply—piston converter and ink cartridges.

FOR FASTEST SERVICE, ORDER
TOLL FREE (800) 882-3050
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Please give order #1263A796 for Voyager Fountain Pens, #1264A796 for Voyager Ballpoint Pens, and #1265A796 for Voyager Sets (Fountain Pen and Ballpoint Pen). If you prefer, mail check or card authorization and expiration date. We need daytime phone for all orders and issuing bank for charge orders. Add ship./insur: \$5.95 for one, \$8.95 for three pens or sets. Add sales tax for CA delivery. You have 30-day return and one-year warranty. We do not refund shipping charges.

For quantity orders (100+), call Ernest Gerard, our Wholesale/Premium Manager at (415) 543-6570 or write him at the address below.

since 1967
haverhills®

131 Townsend Street, San Francisco, CA 94107

Waldhaus



CH-7514 Sils-Maria
Tel. 0114182 - 4 53 31 - Fax 4 59 92
Maria + Felix Dietrich-Kienberger *****
SILS ENGADIN

Switzerland

An extraordinary hotel with turn-of-the-century charms and modern day comfort.

- Summer + winter resort
- Free bus service to the cableways
- Tea concert
- Indoor pool and tennis / Golf nearby
- Children's nursery

Summer season: June 14th - Oct. 20th
Winter season: Dec. 19th - April 24th

Personally managed by the owners

SPECIAL EXHIBITION

4/11 to 5/25

MASTERWORKS OF THE ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

The Arts & Crafts Shop, 1417 Bridgeway
Sausalito, CA 94965 415-331-2554

THE
AMAZON
TROPICAL FORESTS

Ecological tours in the Brazilian and Ecuadorian wilderness conducted by scientific specialists in flora and fauna.

Ecotour Expeditions, 800-688-1822
P.O. Box 1066, Cambridge, MA 02238

Executive BackChair

Engineered for customized orthopedic support to prevent and relieve back pain.

- Built-in adjustable lumbar support
- Adjustable neck rest
- Forward-tilt feature



BackSaver™ FREE Color Catalog
1-800-251-2225 or write
25 Jeffrey Ave., Dept. NYE, Holliston, MA 01746

Introducing a NEW ROBE

so unique that Patent
is Pending for the
TERRY-T-ROBE™
for MEN & LADIES
featuring



- **NEW COMFORT** for all seasons and many uses
- **NO BELT** to bind/adjust
- **NO OPEN FRONT**—never pulls apart
- **LESS BULK**—rich terry is where it can best serve without unneeded overlap
- **100% COTTON** with terry loops on both sides for greatest absorbency (not possible with lighter weight robes)
- **EXCEPTIONAL VALUE**—Luxurious robe with below the knee length (48") and two full pockets. Quality made in U.S.A.

We have been unable to find any robe at any price that can duplicate the advantages of our TERRY-T-ROBE™. Its new fabrication and design skillfully gives just the right bottom flare with neat appearance, easy on-off and maximum comfort WITHOUT the belt problem of too tight—too loose and constant overlap adjustments.

COLOR CHOICE: Snow white or soft medium blue.
SIZES to fit men & ladies from 100-250 lbs. Just give approx. height & weight for each robe AND specify for MAN or LADY. We'll specially select the best size.

SPECIAL TIME LIMITED PRICE — Only \$39⁵⁰

2 for just \$68⁸⁰ (Save over \$10)

GREAT FOR HIS & HER GIFTING

Satisfaction Guaranteed—ORDER NOW while prices include all postage/handling!

WITTMANN TEXTILES, Dept. 476
Hobe Sound, FL 33475 (Ship to FLA add 6% tax)
Natural Fiber Specialists Since 1955

Union Square San Francisco


Service Service Service

We Give IT. You'll Love IT.

800-428-4748



CHANCELLOR HOTEL

433 Powell by the Cable Cars. 



For the discriminating
vacationer
a commitment to excellence

**Kiawah Island
Rentals and Sales**

Pam Harrington Exclusives

803-768-0273

800-845-6966

!! CASHMERES !!

And Lots Of Other Goodies ! Free Brochure, Map!

WHEN IN SCOTLAND, COME ON IN !

or write, phone, or fax. All major cards accepted.

Phone: 011-44-334-72366 (24hrs) Fax: 76416

ST. ANDREWS WOOLLEN MILL, ST. ANDREWS, SCOTLAND

(Yes, we're right here on the 18th Green!)

only recently been translated from the strict, hardworking world of rural Antioquia that their parents fled, and they are caught between cultures. They don't want their parents' thankless lives, and, to judge from a thirty-five-per-cent unemployment rate in the *comunas*, the city doesn't want them.

ON a narrow street in the north-east *comuna*, just uphill from a plaza in the Guadalupe barrio, the kids had gathered in large numbers the other day, sullen and fashionable in their funky haircuts, baggy bermudas, and high-tops. Virtually all the neighborhood women and a good number of unemployed and elderly men had also crowded into the street, because word had flown around the barrio that Jesus Christ was manifest and visible there. He had appeared to a bus driver, who noticed that what seemed to be a damp spot near the bottom of his bathroom door was in fact a miraculous likeness of the face imprinted on the Holy Shroud. The driver, Ricario Hernández, was sitting in his empty, rattle-trap bus, honking furiously at the crowd to move aside so he could park and have lunch. He and his family had tried to keep the apparition a secret, he told me, but in a matter of hours the entire community had somehow found out, and the crowds, in their eagerness to see the face, were on the verge of knocking down the driver's front door. Almost as exciting as the miracle itself was the fact that the local media had taken note of it: when a TeleAntioquia crew showed up with a camera, people in the crowd went nearly berserk in their eagerness to be filmed. "At last!" someone in the crowd exclaimed. "They're going to show something good about us!" A young woman explained why she was so happy. "Even if it turns out to be a fake, we'll have something nice to talk about," she said of the image on the door. "All we ever get to comment on is who went crazy from too much *basuco*, or who got killed. 'So-and-So's lying in a pool of blood on the corner,' they'll say, and we all go running over and stare."

Having failed to see the miraculous bathroom, I walked back downhill with the young woman and with her rotund and lively middle-aged neighbor, whom I had met earlier and whom I'll call Doña Violeta Mejía. The women pointed out a pretty young girl who had been thrown out of her house

because of her hopeless *basuco* addiction, and the corner where the son of Doña Violeta had been shot down a year ago. Doña Violeta's son, it seemed, had a bad *basuco* habit, and stole, and probably also hired himself out as a killer, to support it. Eventually, he died at the hands of former playmates in the neighborhood. Weeping, Doña Violeta said that she spends hours trying to figure out what she and her husband did wrong. "My husband would take him aside, and say, 'Talk to me as a friend,' but he would grab his head between his hands and say there was nothing to be done," she said. "In the end, he would come home so stoned, so crazy, that he would bang his head against the wall until we grabbed him and held him back. We'd tell him he was going to kill himself, but he would say that was what he wanted. He wanted to die, he'd say. He wanted to rest. There was this great anxiety inside him, and we never figured out how to get to it."

There are so many kids in the neighborhood like that, the women said. They want too much, they want lives they can't have, they have no patience, and they are seriously hooked on *basuco*. I asked the women what they thought of Pablo Escobar, and they said that he and the other traffickers had done a great deal of harm, buying kids off and turning them into murderers, and bringing *basuco* into the world. But when we reached Doña Violeta's house, and settled down in a comfortable living-room, her husband, Don Jaime, who was about to set off for his noonday shift at a plastics factory, said that the neighborhood was also much to blame. There was a woman up the hill who, ten years ago, became the first person in the neighborhood to sell *basuco*. The Mejías and other neighbors remonstrated with her, Don Jaime said, but she answered, "I have my children to bring up." She had two sons then. Now one was dead, killed in a fight, and the other was hooked on *basuco*, but she was still selling the stuff. "We *paisas* are sometimes too interested in money," Don Jaime said. And yet, he added, if he had his life to live over again he would do everything the same way. Not Doña Violeta. She had come here with her husband a quarter of a century before "from the last village on the last road in Antioquia," she said. If they had stayed in the countryside, she believes, she

would still have her son. But Don Jaime used the word *fracaso*, which means a shattering failure, to refer to what would have happened to him if he had stayed on as a day laborer on the coffee *fincas* of southwestern Antioquia. Here he had a house with four bedrooms and real tile floors, good food, a telephone. His three youngest children seemed to be doing all right, he thought. How could he have stayed in rural Antioquia?

The Mejías went through the list of the kids in the neighborhood who had died or were on drugs. On some streets, they claimed, every household had at least one addicted son or—less frequently—daughter. They said that their nephews suffered the same uncontrollable anxiety as their son, partly caused, no doubt, by the death squads that had started operating in the neighborhood. Because the men who roamed the streets at night, with brown kerchiefs tied over their faces, were brawny and not very young, the Mejías were convinced that they were cops. The men killed *basuqueros* and petty thieves, but sometimes missed their mark. Don Jaime and Doña Violeta pointed out the bullet holes in the façade of the house next to theirs, made one evening when the masked men started shooting aimlessly up and down the street. There was no place in the entire neighborhood where one could feel safe.

Later, I chatted briefly with their surviving son, a taciturn kid named Jorge Mario who smokes a great deal of marijuana but stays away from *basuco*. It was only midmorning, but he already looked as stoned as the kids in front of the bus driver's house, who, with joints dangling from their fingers, had been waiting to see the miracle. I asked Jorge Mario what he wanted to do with his life. "I'm a bum," he answered. "What's the point of making plans if I'm not going to get anywhere anyway? All the kids around here are getting killed. We're all going to die. It's useless." Then he went out to sit on the stoop and stare down at Medellín.

A PANORAMIC shot of the distant city is a recurrent motif in the work of the filmmaker Victor Gaviria, who has succeeded in presenting Medellín as if filmed through the eyes of the *pistolocos*, for whom he feels an obsessive, painful tenderness.

Gaviria has dedicated most of the last five years to documenting the violent lives of these kids; his first feature film, "Rodrigo D: No Futuro," is a fictionalized account of the lives of the punks who acted in it. (One of them was Doña Violeta's son.) In the movie, filmed in 1986, Rodrigo D tries to recover from the pain of his mother's death, fails to make it as a drummer with a punk-rock group, and remains alienated from his neighborhood friends, all of whom are living a drug-and-adrenaline high—staging holdups and playing with guns. In the end, Rodrigo throws himself from the window of one of the skyscrapers that are inescapably in view from the hills. The title role was played by Ramiro Meneses, an aspiring musician from the *comunas*; he is the only one of the cast of boys who did not have a criminal record, and the only one who has been able to make the transition to an acting career in Bogotá. All the other actors are now dead.

I had lunch the other day with Gaviria, whom I have known for some time, and asked him to talk about the boys from the *comunas*. He was in the process of preparing a Colombian version of a television documentary on the deaths of his various actors, which he had made for German television, and he was still recovering from the death of his co-scriptwriter of "Rodrigo D," a talented twenty-one-year-old named Ramón Correa, who was not able to star in that movie because he had been arrested and sentenced to prison for armed robbery just as filming was about to start. (On being released from prison, Ramón Correa travelled with Gaviria to present "Rodrigo D" at the Cannes Film Festival, but apparently found the experience more threatening than pleasurable. He despised the food, and seemed to feel that it was his duty to pick up the wallets and watches left lying so carelessly on the beach. Back home, he tried to do some serious writing, but he never made it. He died in January, shot to death in front of his mother's house.)

Gaviria said that he was drawn to the *comunas* by the same questions that haunt all Medellín: How could this city produce a generation of murderers for hire? How could all our values go so wrong? Despite the fact that he is now in his mid-thirties, there is something wide-eyed and vulnerable about him, a kind of inner adolescence that makes

GET AWAY THE WYNDHAM WAY.

Nested between Georgetown and the White House, right on Pennsylvania Avenue, lies the Wyndham Bristol Hotel. A place

where you may relax on weekends

\$89

but we won't.

Per room, per night, not per person

For reservations, call us at

202-955-6400 or 1-800-822-4200.

Or call your travel agent. Then

come stay the weekend and let

us show you The Wyndham Way.



WYNDHAM BRISTOL HOTEL

THE RIGHT WAY. THE WYNDHAM WAY.

2430 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20037 202-955-6400

Rate good Friday, Saturday & Sunday nights.
Not applicable to conventions or groups.
Ask about our Winter Weekend Packages.

EXCLUSIVE REPLICAS OF



CLASSICAL SCULPTURE FROM MAJOR EUROPEAN MUSEUMS

BACCHIC DANCE • Found in 1776 on the site of ancient Gabii. From the National Museum, Naples. 26" x 27" \$295.00 P.P. in terra cotta or green bronze finish.

GUST GALLERY

1920 Washington St., Boston, MA 02118
PLEASE SEND \$2.00 FOR CATALOGUE

Galley Boy

Antigua, West Indies

All Inclusive • Half-Mile Beach
Only 30 Rooms • Call 1-800-223-6510
"More a house party than a hotel!"

Come to Scotland...
Come to Ardsheal House



Historic manor house on Loch Linnhe in the Western Highlands, now a small country hotel with superb food and fine wines. Write the Taylors for a brochure: Kentallen by Appin, Argyll PA38 4BX Scotland. Tel: 44 63174 227. Fax: 44 63174 342.

Bryn Mawr

Post-Baccalaureate Premedical Program

For men and women with Bachelor's degrees who are changing career goals.

Five-Year Programs

Admitted applicants may also apply for provisional early admission to the following medical and dental programs:

- Brown University
- Dartmouth College
- Hahnemann University
- Medical College of Pennsylvania
- University of Rochester
- University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine

Division of General Studies
Bryn Mawr College
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-2899
(215) 526-7350

MARCASITE & STERLING
LINKED BRACELET WATCH
MOTHER OF PEARL FACE
ONE YEAR WARRANTY
QUARTZ
\$145



Since 1974 FREE CATALOG

590 Valley Road, Upper Montclair
New Jersey 07043 (201) 746-1715

Major Credit Cards & Checks Postage Included
N.J. Residents Add 7% Sales Tax

GALAPAGOS

You, 9 other adventurers and our licensed naturalist will sail by yacht to explore more islands than any other Galapagos expedition. 60 trip dates. Machu Picchu option. Free brochure.

Inca Floats 415-420-1550
1311-Y 63rd St., Emeryville CA 94608

CAROLINA LOWCOUNTRY SOUPS

- SHE-CRAB SOUP • SWEETMARSH OYSTER STEW
- CREAMY CLAM CHOWDER

Gift-Packed in an attractive wooden crate. Distinctive gift. \$14.99 plus \$4 shipping and handling. VISA, MC, AMEX or call for brochure. 1-800-735-3215
Sea Island Mercantile & Provisioning, Ltd.
928 Bay St. • P.O. Box 100 • Dept. NM • Beaufort, SC 29901

him sympathetic to the *punketos*' harsh music, their morally flat view of the world, their fascination with drugs. "I fell very much in love with the lives these boys lead, and we began a dialogue that in reality was between the two cities that coexist in Medellín," he told me.

His first encounter was with a teenager named John Galvis, who was killed a couple of months later. "When he walked into my apartment, he said it was the first time he'd been in an apartment building for a purpose other than stealing," Gaviria recalled. "Then he talked about his love for his mother. He told us how sometimes when he was feeling upset he'd go for a little walk with her, and smoke a joint, and then he would feel better. I began to see that this was all part of the *paisas*' intense devotion to their families. I understood that the most extreme acts of terrorism had their origins in kids' inability to see their families suffer, or fail, which is what always happens in these neighborhoods—the sister starts turning tricks, the brother gets hooked on *basuco*. I spent a long time recording interviews before I knew that I had to make a movie. It was because the phenomenon came to seem so *normal*, so much a part of everyday life, that I felt I had to leave a record of what I'd seen."

Gaviria, who is usually full of good-natured banter and, in white sneakers, a T-shirt, and bluejeans, always looks bouncy and clean-cut, was now talking in dead earnest, brushing aside interruptions while he let his food get cold. "For the kids, who in their lives have never known the slightest power, delinquency is a way of looking for power. No one pays attention to them, no one notices their lives. They're living N.N.s"—the "No Name" that identifies paupers' graves here. "Some of them have fathers with relatively structured lives, maybe even factory or construction workers, but these men are completely defeated—they have values that are useless in Medellín. The kids fall in love with whoever has power—you know, young people like values that involve some heroic element, some ability to achieve great things. Killers can do that—the kids have seen it on television, where the heroes have guns. That's why you can't explain the *sicariato*"—the culture of the hired

assassin—"as an individual pathology. It's something else. Medellín is the capital of fashion, Colombians say, and fashion is the present. Medellín is the present. You go a few miles outside Medellín and it's all the past; it's all dusty roads, and farmhouses, and they've never even heard of the Gulf War there. These kids who have no place in the world, whom nobody has ever made room for, look at least for a place in time, in the present, through fashion. It's vitally important to them to look right. When they get money from a job, they spend it immediately on something for their mothers and on clothes. Of course they're not going to have any respect for their fathers, in their shabby old backcountry suits!"

Gaviria was a poet before he taught himself to make movies, and he has paid close attention to his actors' zigzagging, hazy, humorless speech. Through their words he has come to believe that in the *pistolocos*' fragmented world their essential relationship with reality is magical. "You see it in the language," he said. "At first, they used the word *traído* to refer to the things they 'found,' or stole. *Traído*, meaning 'that which is brought,' is a term we *paisas* use to refer to the Christmas gifts that the baby Jesus leaves on the table, so they would say, 'Look at this motorcycle, or this watch—what a *traído* I found!' Then the word became its opposite: *traído* referred to an enemy, and then to a corpse. That is, *traído* refers to everything that appears in front of one, which in the end is always death." An essential part of the magic involves turning everyone into an enemy, to ward off surprises. "Once John Galvis and another boy pulled guns on my producer and me, and yelled '*Quietos!*'—'Freeze!' That's another word. There's a children's game in which you point and yell 'Freeze!' and turn the others into statues. Now the kids refer to their holdup or murder victims as *quietos*. When they pulled guns on me, they were turning me into a *quieto*. You turn your potential enemies to stone, and they can't threaten you. The kids spend their days looking for enemies, spotting them, making them up. The point is to kill them before they kill you."

In the documentary for German television, Gaviria traces the swift de-



terioration of his actors into *basuco* addiction and, eventually, death. In the opening shots, the boys complain that times are hard, that there is no work anymore, and, bitterly, that they don't even have the money for a decent pair of bluejeans. Then, one by one, they drop off. With one notable exception, all of those who were killed died at the hands of other boys in the neighborhood—boys whose relatives they might have killed, or boys with whom they might have shared a gun or a joint or been blood brothers just days before. "I think that in the end the kids kill just to see what it's like," Gaviria said. He is now working on a script about a fifteen-year-old killer he knew, who had held a wounded friend's head in his lap in order to watch him die. "I think they want to know how their own passage from one world into another will be," he said.

The exception who did not die at the hands of his peers was a boy known as El Alacrán—The Scorpion. It seems that his death was a consequence of one of Pablo Escobar's ongoing efforts to take revenge on the state for its pursuit of him. Escobar has been severely hurt by the anti-drug offensive that started in the summer of 1989. His chief associate, the rather bloodier and more reckless Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, was killed in December of that year. Escobar's principal commercial subalterns have also been killed, and on the military side of his operations he has seen the Prisco band wiped out. He is said to be cornered and to have cash-flow problems, and to a large extent all this has happened because the restructured Medellín police have managed to keep him on the run. Accordingly, Escobar sent word around the *comunas* last April that he would pay more than four thousand dollars for every cop killed. El Alacrán, who told Gaviria and his crew that he had once been gang-raped by a police squad, was more than eager to take up Escobar's offer. According to what are necessarily unreliable reports, El Alacrán killed a few cops, and then, one day last October, was chased down by police in a patrol car and shot to death.

Whether the Medellín police pursuit of the drug chiefs has degenerated into a private war between cops and gangs has become an openly debated question in the last few weeks, largely as a result of a car bomb that went off here on February 16th, and the bomb's after-

U.S. Dental Research says: "You have a 75% chance of developing gum disease!"

STOP BLEEDING AND ARREST GUM DISEASE IN 30 DAYS!

Simply Use
Dr. Woog® PerioSystem®
The 3-In-1 Home Professional Periodontal System.



INSTEAD OF:

- ~~1) An Automatic Toothbrush (like Interplak®)~~
- ~~2) An Oral Irrigator (like WaterPik®)~~
- ~~3) Regular Hand Flossing and Gum Stimulation~~



"Arrests gum disease, stops bleeding gums and prevents loss of teeth."— Univ. of California at San Francisco

Geneva, Switzerland — Revolutionary Swiss methodology arrests bleeding and gum disease in less than 30 days. Plus it eliminates 97% of plaque. Proven by over 160 university clinical tests, worldwide.

100,000 Satisfied Customers Worldwide
Dr. P.G. Woog, Ph.D., Toulouse University. Inventor of the first electric toothbrush (1956), owned by E.R. Squibb & Sons as the BROXODENT™ since 1968. He has contributed to over 160 scientific papers.

More powerful than Interplak®
Yet only the hydraulically-powered Woog gently and effortlessly massages the gums, strengthening them and eliminating disease.

Safer than WaterPik®
17,000 micro-droplets of water and air per second instantly shower away loosened plaque and debris, act as a hydraulic toothpick and accelerate circulation.

Easier than hand flossing
Woog's 4 custom periodontal attachments and micro-fractionated action reach, clean and massage where other systems simply can't... even around orthodontics, brass or chrome bridges, and partial dentures!

Risk FREE Trial
With so much to gain, shouldn't you call or write today for a 30 day risk free trial offer?

Dr. Woog® PerioSystem®
CCN Inc., 1 Research Park, Dept. B094
Chester, CT 06412-1353, or call Toll-Free,
1-800-677-5556
(In Canada 1-800-999-4744)

You will receive your **FREE** Dental Care Information within 7 days.

brigger®
is for those who love comfort, solid oak and beautiful fabrics. We ship our rockers, chairs, love-seats, sofas, and side tables free with UPS.

Write or call for brochure and direct ordering information. toll free 1-800-451-7247

klein design, inc.
99 sadler street, gloucester, ma 01930

PRESERVATION PLAN ON IT
Write:
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Department PA
1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Enjoy an Afternoon in England
Tour AGECROFT HALL in Richmond, Virginia—a Tudor Manor House, built in Britain before America was discovered. It crossed the Atlantic in 1926 and was re-created on 23 acres as a private home, in town. Now a unique Museum, exquisitely furnished, authentic in every detail. With superb gardens, film and guided tour. Send self-addressed stamped envelope for brochure. Open all year.
AGECROFT HALL, 4305 Sulgrave Rd., Richmond, VA 23221

DO YOU TEACH? IF SO, PLEASE READ ON...



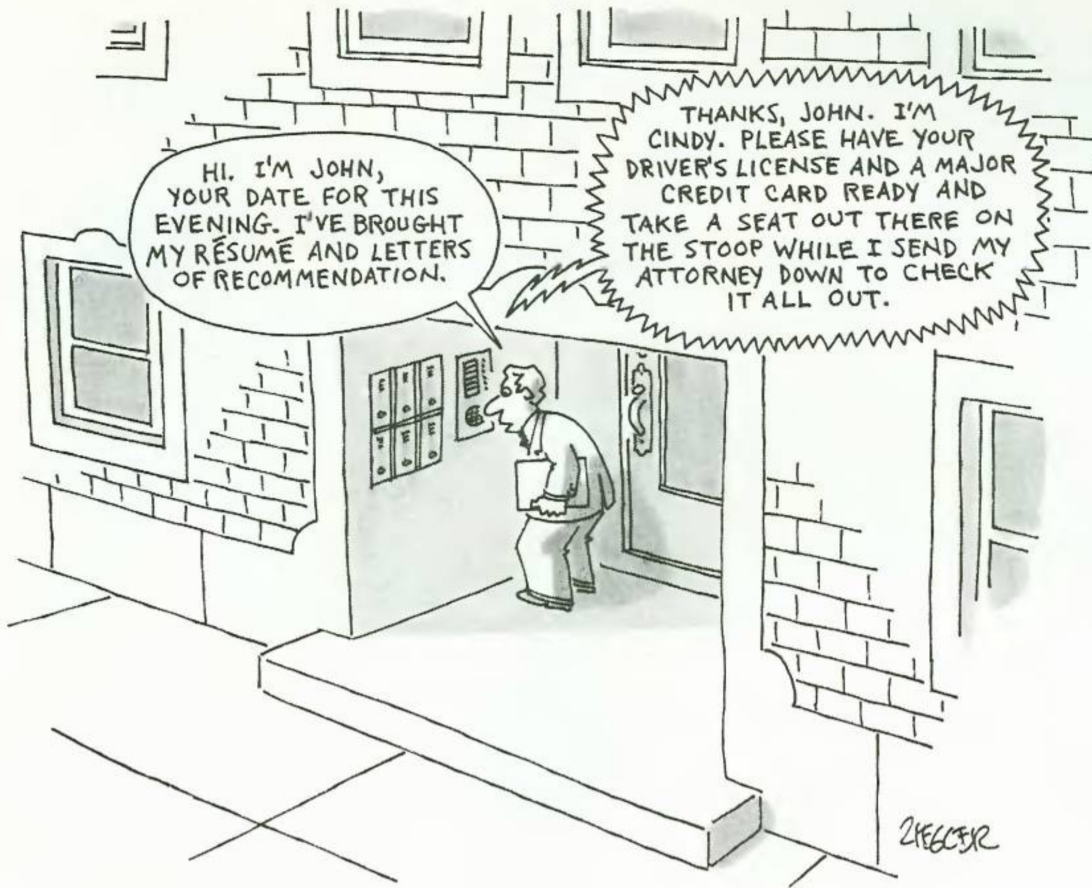
ANNE HALL

"I first saw The New Yorker when my high school English teacher gave me a copy."

-Garrison Keillor

For information and materials to help you use The New Yorker in your high school or college classroom, please call Elaine Berman at (212) 536-5415 or write to her at the address below:

THE NEW YORKER EDUCATION PROGRAM
20 West 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036-7440



math. The car bomb, the signature weapon of the drug trade, exploded outside the Medellín bullring that Saturday afternoon just as people were emerging from the ring into the improvised fair that sets up after *corridos*. Twenty-four people were killed and more than a hundred were seriously wounded. Of the dead, ten were members of the Medellín police force. After the rubble from the bomb was picked over, and the victims were identified, police officials explained what had happened: the car bomb was placed near a supporting pillar of a viaduct underpass—an area that is used as a parking lot on days when there are bullfights. Someone then phoned the police and reported signs of terrorist activity near that spot. When the police had got close enough, the car bomb was detonated by remote control.

On February 17th, police spokesmen declared that the bomb was the work of close friends of the last remaining Prisco, Conrado, in revenge for the death of his last surviving brother, Armando, during a shootout with the police in January. According to the police, Conrado was a typically evil member of the family who went by the nickname *El Médico*—The Doctor. The following day, Señora Leticia de

Prisco announced the disappearance of her son, and when his body was found, two days later, the staff of the Metropolitan Institute of Health declared that Conrado Prisco had been a practicing physician—a hardworking doctor, who spent his free time in volunteer work and at the staff soccer games, and had no connection that anyone knew of to the violent world of his brothers. It seemed that somewhere a mistake had been made.

It is typical of Medellín's upside-down ethical universe that the New York-based human-rights group Americas Watch has found itself having to document claims initially made by Los Extraditables, as Escobar and a group of his associates like to be called, of police torture and arbitrary execution of drug suspects, and that Los Extraditables now routinely champion the cause of human rights in their communiqués. It is also typical of the bizarre, contradictory, and confused relations between the state and the drug trade that in Bogotá the Attorney General has opened an investigation into these charges. There are several reasons for his doing so, one being that there is serious evidence that the police routinely take the law into their own hands. It is also true that Escobar is

using the cause of human rights as part of a campaign to obtain status as a “politico-military organization” similar to two guerrilla groups that were able to turn in their weapons and rejoin civilian life within the last two years. To the degree that the government is considering Los Extraditables’ allegations of human-rights violations, it is signalling that political status—or some satisfactory equivalent—is not impossible. But if Pablo Escobar and his Extraditables can get a hearing from the Attorney General it is mostly because they are already a political reality and a social force whose demands the establishment can no longer ignore.

SPANISH is not a language that lends itself to neologisms, and

they’re somewhat frowned upon in Colombia, where part of the self-definition of the élite involves a commitment to guarding the purity of the language. Nevertheless, the drugs and the violence in Medellín are so far beyond the scope of the Real Academia dictionary that new words are forever cropping up: there’s *basuco*, from *pasta base de cocaína*; there’s *pistoloco*, *violéntologo*, *paniquear* (as in the English verb “to panic”); and there’s the ever-growing list of words prefixed with *narco-*, among them *narcocondominio* and *narcocongresista*. Old words also come to be used in curious ways. There is, for example, the “democratization” of wealth that the drug trade has brought Colombia, which means the ability granted to working-class people suddenly in the possession of drug money to rub it in the faces of the rich. Apologists for the drug trade often argue that the upper classes and the political establishment in Bogotá would never have opposed the drug trade if it had not enabled former punks and small-time hoods to buy property in the posh neighborhoods, and they may be right. In the nineteen-seventies, when Escobar was making his fortune, dealing in cocaine was still looked upon by many as a questionable but harmless

occupation, and I know society women whose mothers went on international shopping trips with Escobar's mother and thought the experience was a giggle. It wasn't until the consolidated drug trade emerged, in the mid-eighties, as an economic and paramilitary power capable of overturning the normal way of doing business in Colombia that the establishment reared back in alarm. But by then the traffickers had multiplied in numbers and in strength. Men like the Ochoa brothers and Escobar, in Medellín, and Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, in the city of Cali, about two hundred miles south of Medellín, are now probably the country's most daring and successful entrepreneurs. The Ochoas ran—and probably still own—state-of-the-art cattle ranches, complete with solar-heating systems and other alternative-technology innovations. Rodríguez Orejuela has made handsome profits from radio stations, drugstore chains, and soccer teams he owns. Even Escobar, despite a funny greased-down hairdo and a lower-class belly, has put on airs. The 1988 bomb set by his rivals that literally blew open the luxury apartment building where he then lived revealed an apartment described as tastefully, and even soberly, furnished, stuffed with a first-rate art collection that appeared to include everything from Chinese porcelain to paintings by Fernando Botero.

At this stage, drug money has so pervaded agriculture, commerce, and real estate that, according to an estimate by Salomón Kalmanovitz, dean of the economics faculty at the Universidad Nacional, the wealth could account for as much as seven per cent of the gross national product. The members of what is known as the "leading class" have always been pragmatic—that's one of the reasons Colombia has remained institutionally stable and economically healthy despite constant turmoil—and there is among them a deep-seated conviction that, however repugnant the drug traders may be, they are now too powerful to be successfully challenged. Consequently, throughout the succession of government anti-drug offensives and drug wars there has remained an undercurrent of conciliation.

In 1984, former President Alfonso López Michelsen met in Panama with Pablo Escobar and Jorge Luis Ochoa,

who offered to bring their money back to Colombia and turn over their laboratories if the government proved willing to grant them an amnesty. Five years later, when world consumption of cocaine had doubled, an intermediary for the Medellín group made a new offer, this time in a series of meetings with President Virgilio Barco's private secretary, Germán Montoya. The Medellín group was again offering to get out of the business, but this time they were asking for more. This time they wanted extradition declared unconstitutional. They also wanted to make sure that the country's various guerrilla groups—which had made a practice of extorting "war taxes" on ranch land, including the very considerable holdings of the *narcotraficantes*—would be defeated. Talks between Montoya and the Medellín intermediaries ended the week after the Presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán was assassinated and the Barco administration declared war on the drug trade. But by then there were a number of members of the establishment—like Juan Gómez Martínez, the publisher of the daily *El Colombiano* and also, at the time, the mayor of Medellín—who were willing to go on record as stating flatly that the only way to bring the violence in the country to an end was to negotiate with the traffickers and legalize the cocaine trade. People familiar with the thinking of Barco's successor, President César Gaviria, say that he was convinced long before he took office, last August 7th, that a negotiated way out of the drug crisis was unavoidable and indispensable. One of his first acts was to



issue a decree that would eliminate extradition—the principal focus of the traffickers' anti-government campaign—if they turned themselves in. In addition, the government offered a major reduction of their sentences to traffickers who took up this offer. It is Gaviria's political misfortune that Pablo Escobar decided to strengthen the Presidential resolution with a series of kidnappings of prominent Colombians which began a few weeks after Gaviria's inauguration.

Two hostages now remain in captivity: one of the heirs to Colombia's most powerful publishing family; and the sister-in-law of Luis Carlos Galán, the Presidential candidate who was murdered on the day the 1989 anti-drug offensive started. Also in the ini-

A New Yorker's
rendezvous place,
a fancy meeting you place,
Campton Place.



CAMPTON PLACE HOTEL

San Francisco, at Union Square
(415) 781-5555
Inside CA (800) 235-4300
Outside CA (800) 647-4007



"A private estate that sweeps all honors as the most enchanting lakefront sanctuary of its kind in America."

THE HIDEAWAY REPORT

THE POINT Experience life as it's meant to be, at this former Rockefeller estate in the Adirondack mountains—private, romantic, and eminently civilized. Enjoy breakfast in bed or under the hemlocks; cruise over crystal-clear upper Saranac Lake by canoe, sailboat, or vintage mahogany motor boats; enjoy golf, croquet, waterskiing, or just a snooze in the hammock; dine elegantly by candlelight in the Great Hall with old friends and new. Discover The Point—endorsed by ten years of rave reviews, and one of only nineteen Relais & Chateaux in the U.S.

THE POINT, Saranac Lake, NY 12983
(518) 891-5678 (800) 255-3530

The only national sourcebook of fine country and city inns hosting business conferences and retreats.

THE INN CONFERENCE CATALOG

Hardcover, 176 pages, 257 lavish color photographs.

1-800-648-6235 ■ \$45.00 postpaid ■
or Box 338, Hillsdale, NY 12529

PAUL REST ♦ FINE ART

Restoration Services
Available

707-823-1823 • 800-333-9ART • Fax: 707-823-9338
8463 Peachland Avenue • Sebastopol, California 95472

By Appointment Only



SUMMER LOVE.

Summer here has a rhythm all its own. Come share a beach outing. Rediscover golf, tennis. Bask at the beach club. Moment by moment, Summer hums with happy activity. Our junior social staff and planned children's events add to the chorus. Leaving you time for dining, dancing—Summer romance! The Cloister,[®] Sea Island, GA 31561. 800-SEA-ISLAND.

Sea Island[®]
THE CLOISTER[®]

Family Festival, July 7-Sept. 2

Barwa—The Complete chair ... Recovers ... Accessories

The world renowned 2-position leisure chair that has given contoured comfort to millions indoors as well as outside. Feet up, head back... ah-h-h: tensions pass and the body totally relaxes. Order your own therapy today!

The Complete Barwa: thick-walled tubular aluminum frame with canvas cover (color choices below), springs to attach cover for a taut, perfect fit. Tip-proof two position base. Complete \$225. (\$15 UPS)

The Barwa Recoverer: welter-weight vat-dyed duck, fits all existing barwa frames. Natural, Brown, Terra Cotta, Hunter Green, Citron Yellow or Royal. Instructions included. \$55 (\$5. postage each)

Set of Springs \$29.95 (\$5. postage each)

Headrest Pillow: foam-filled, 22x11x2" thick, same colors as for covers. \$30. (\$3.95 postage ea.)

Exclusively ours. Now sold only thru the mails

Send check, money order, Visa or M/C w/exp. date

Catalog \$1, free w/order

Barwa P.O. Box 925 Dept. NY422 San Juan Capistrano, CA, 92693

Charge Orders can call (714) 661-3000

PERSONALIZED CARTOUCHE

Your name or initials translated into ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics

Free Brochure Available
Cartouche shown: "Jane"

18k Gold Pendant from \$150
Sterling Silver \$40

1-800-237-3358
Discoveries

207 Ramsay Alley, Dept. NY1
Alexandria, VA 22314 (703) 546-9448 (in VA)

HANDMADE IN EGYPT

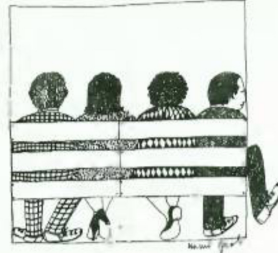
DURLEY HOUSE

Magnificent All Suite Hotel in Sloane Street

115 SLOANE STREET LONDON SW1X 9PJ
TELEPHONE 071-235 5537 FAX 071-259 6977
TELEX 919235 DURLEY G
USA TOLL FREE 1 800-553-6074

London

tial group of hostages were Marina Montoya, the sixty-five-year-old sister of Germán Montoya, who is now Ambassador to Canada, and forty-year-old Diana Turbay, the cherished only daughter of former President Julio César Turbay Ayala (1978-82), who is an immensely powerful man. Sometime last October, when Los Extraditables had collected ten hostages, they announced that they would like to bargain, and this time they offered much less favorable terms than any in the past. The government immediately issued a few modifications of its original extradition decree; for instance, it allowed a trafficker who may be facing serious charges in the United States to avoid extradition



by confessing to only one (presumably minor) crime here. Polls showed that the public supported the unacknowledged negotiations, and so did the Archbishop of Bogotá and the leftist leader and the two former Presidents—Misael Pastrana and Alfonso López Michelsen—who occasionally form a negotiating body with the drug traffickers and the guerrillas. As a sign of the drug traffickers' good will, there was quiet in Medellín for a few weeks, which gave rise to a type of story that appears once or twice a year in the local press under headlines like "Medellín Resurgent!"

An image that filled the television screens late in January, of former President Turbay leaning over the coffin of his dead daughter, Diana, is likely to remain with Colombians for some time. Turbay is not a popular man here, particularly among liberals and the left. During his administration, the military were given a great deal of money and free rein in their endless war against the guerrillas, and it was in those years that Amnesty International issued its first damning report on Colombia, detailing the military's systematic use of torture. I watched the television report on Diana Turbay's funeral with a leftist friend for whom loathing her father was almost a matter of principle, but the sight of the heartbroken old man muttering endearments into the coffin made my friend blink and turn away.

"It's the democratization of pain," the *violentólogo* Alonso Salazar commented later on that scene. "It used to be that only the poor of this country

had to feel that kind of sorrow." It was a botched show of force by the police at a farm on the outskirts of Medellín, where Diana Turbay was being held, that enabled her captors to shoot her before their escape. In the following hours, Diana's mother, Nydia Quintero (she is divorced from Julio César Turbay), added to the national commotion by blaming President Gaviria for her daughter's death. He should have kept the police away, she said, and she went on to ask that he make peace with the drug trade as quickly as possible. That, then, was the national mood two months ago: the cocaine traffickers are too powerful to take on; let's settle with them quickly, bring them into the mainstream, and put a stop to the bloodshed.

However, when President Gaviria went on television the following week and announced that further lenient modifications of the narcodecrees were being studied and would soon be announced, the speech did not sit well. "How much did the government give in?" *Semana*, the leading newsweekly, asked. On January 30th, the day after Gaviria's speech, a communiqué from Los Extraditables announced that before Diana's unfortunate death they had ordered the execution of another hostage, and that it was probably too late to cancel the order. The body of Marina Montoya was identified on January 31st. Seventeen days later, Fortunato Gaviria, a cousin and close friend of President Gaviria, died in the course of an amateurish kidnap attempt, which appeared to have been contracted out by Escobar. When Gaviria's government minister then affirmed that the new narcodecrees would stand, quite a few people thought that the President was looking craven.

Against that charge, Gaviria's defenders affirm that the decrees are part of a strategy to continue armed attempts to stop the drug trade while offering the traffickers a bloodless way out. They point out that Jorge Luis Ochoa, Medellín's second-biggest trafficker, has surrendered, along with two of his brothers, and is peacefully awaiting trial in Medellín. They don't point out, although they could, that while Pablo Escobar may be on the run, and cocaine seizures are at an all-time high,

the big 1989 anti-drug offensive has hardly been a success, despite having taken the military approach to the drug problem about as far as it can go. Except for Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, Escobar's terrorist associate, not a single head of a drug-export ring has been caught, and Rodríguez's share of the market has simply been reapportioned among a group of up-and-coming traders. United States narcotics officials believe that partly as a result of the drug war, which has been directed mostly against the traders in Medellín, a group of traders based in Cali has been able to overtake the Medellín group in terms of their share of the export market. Meanwhile, the overall production and export of cocaine from Colombia are estimated to be up slightly from what they were when the offensive began. Under the circumstances, a negotiated surrender by the drug traffickers might make sense, but a member of the diplomatic community pointed out that the government has opted for a conciliatory approach "at a stage when the judicial system doesn't seem up to the task." The roles of judge and prosecutor are combined under the country's Napoleonic Code, and those judges capable of refusing a bribe often do not have the resources to gather evidence that will stick against even the most notorious traffickers. Someone here who was closely involved with the Ochoas' surrender told me that at this stage the government has no charges against any of the brothers, and that, even with evidence provided by the United States of charges against him there, the likelihood is that Jorge Luis Ochoa will get off with a three- or four-year sentence.

As for Escobar, this person thought that he was waiting to see the results of some of the Ochoa trials before turning himself in. Opinion is divided on this. Some diplomats here think that Escobar will settle for nothing less than recognition of Los Extraditables as a politico-military organization, which could conceivably entitle him to run for Congress again in a few years. Others think that he will never put himself in a Colombian jail, where a legion of his enemies could get at him.

NO matter what happens to the founders and leaders of the cocaine trade, however, no one seems to have any idea of what to do with the gangs they are leaving behind. There

doesn't seem to be any way that even Medellín's comparatively generous municipal-services structure can stretch itself to the dimensions of the crisis at hand. There aren't enough ambulances, clinics, teachers, and efficient policemen to go around, and, anyway, it's unclear at this stage whether even the most judicious efforts by law-abiding cops and enlightened social workers could bring measurable short-term relief. I talked to a man involved from the social-services point of view in the city's efforts to cope with the violence, and he went on about municipal plans to unify the various existing plans, and about joint housing-rehabilitation programs with international nongovernmental organizations, and about the redirecting of budget expenditures, until I interrupted to ask whether he had ever been on the hills, and whether, having been there, he thought that any of his proposed measures would do any good.

At that, he threw up his hands and heaved a great sigh. "You would have to change the society altogether for the problem to disappear," he said. "*Paisas* are adventurous by nature. You know, Antioquia was colonized only in the last century, and the people who came here were mostly gold miners. We're a migrant people, enterprising, and fond of wealth and risk. The tragedy was that in the nineteen-seventies, when the private-enterprise system was crashing to the ground in Antioquia, the traffickers showed up with an alternative, and in a stratified society like this one it was very appealing: the traffickers said 'You, too, can have a swimming pool, and you don't even have to work for it. Work will never make you rich.' The fundamental thing is that we can't offer better prospects. We know of a lot of companies here that fire their good workers—the ones who last—at the end of their ninth year of employment, because after ten years they have a right to half a

pension. How can you convince a kid that there's a future in being a good citizen and working a steady job? I don't see any real change in the situation for this generation."

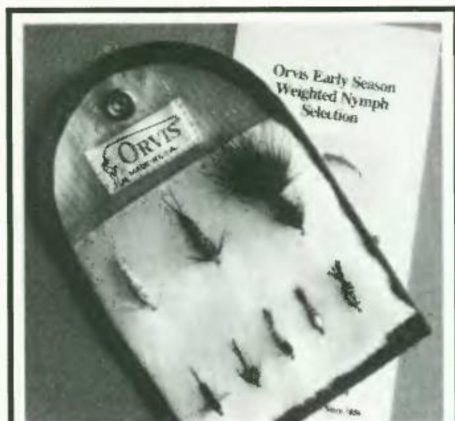
I asked this man if the city's job would be made any easier by Escobar's capture or surrender.

He looked at me in amazement. "Don't you see that part of the reason things are so bad now is precisely that Escobar is so much weaker than he used to be?" he said. "There's tremendous unemployment among the drug gangs now, and they're all fighting for the available crumbs. Also, there are all sorts of old scores that are getting settled, now that there's no one to keep the lid on things. Everybody's freelancing; there are the death squads and the pseudo-revolutionary groups. An awful lot of teen-agers have weapons. This city is going to be in dreadful shape for the immediate future."

I MET a young man, about twenty-five, whom I shall call Johnny. (The English name is a favorite here.) When Johnny was ten, his father, who was an alcoholic and travelled the countryside doing odd jobs, finally settled, with his wife and their six children, in the northeast *comuna*. By the time Johnny was twelve, he had learned to contribute to the meagre family income by begging. When he was eighteen, the military press-ganged him, along with dozens of other youths, in a noonday sweep through the streets of the downtown district. Following this forcible conscription, which Johnny describes as a "waking nightmare," he served out the mandatory eighteen-month draft term, acquiring an extensive knowledge of weapons and then an honorable discharge. He returned home and found a job as a security guard for a downtown office building. An overwhelming desire to "improve my mother's life" made him single out a friendly-looking executive and sneak some time from his duty hours to wash and polish the executive's car. His hope was that the executive would notice this, be pleased, and offer him a better-paying job as a bodyguard, driver, or carwasher. What actually happened was that Johnny's supervisor caught him in the act and immediately fired him.

Eventually, Johnny was able to find another job, as a messenger, but the work pained him. Above all, he says





DISCOVER TROPHY TROUT

Big trout feed near the bottom... Get down to them with our **Orvis Weighted Nymphs**, classic imitations and guaranteed fish takers. Offer includes 8 proven nymph patterns, fleece-lined fly book, "How to Fish Them" booklet, Orvis Fishing Catalog, and \$3.00 gift certificate good on your first order. ALL FOR \$9.00.

Call toll-free 1-800-548-9548.

Route 7A
Manchester, VT 05254

- Enclosed find \$9.00. Send the Orvis Weighted Nymph Selection, Orvis Catalog, and \$3.00 Gift Certificate.
- Send FREE Catalog only. **NYN7**

Name _____
Address _____
Zip _____



GRACIOUS. GLORIOUS.

Waterview suites. Glorious gardens.
American Regional Cuisine Open year 'round.

Conamessett Inn
On Cape Cod

P.O. Box 707, Falmouth, MA 02541 • 508/548-2300

Silver Broccoli Pin

Newport Silversmith James Breakell cooks up a deliciously detailed stalk to pin on lapel or apron. Hand cast in sterling \$35 or 14K gold \$376. Add \$3.50 shipping. VISA/MC/AMEX 1-800-767-6411. Send \$2 for color catalog.

J.H. Breakell & Co.

69 Mill Street Dept NYBR5
Newport, RI 02840



1 1/2" Tall

CANADA BY RAFT!

Down virgin rivers in mountains of British Columbia. Untouched wilderness. Sparkling Chilcotin & mighty Fraser. Yacht cruise up coastal fjord, flight over glaciers of Coast Range plus 240 exciting yet very safe miles by raft through cleanest, most magnificent scenery in Canada! \$2175, 11 days Vancouver to Vancouver.

CANADIAN RIVER EXPEDITIONS (604) 738-4449
Suite 402, 845 Chilco St. Vancouver, BC, Canada V6G 2R2

over and over, he has always wanted desperately "to do the right thing, to improve my situation, to be a *persona decente*." He wanted to furnish his mother's house with matched dining- and living-room sets, and have a job in which he was not faceless and nameless, but he couldn't see his way from here to there, from messenger work to being called Señor. Nevertheless, he worked steadily for almost seven years, because he had found more consuming activities, which made his daytime hours seem pale and secondary. First, he ran into one of the many guerrilla groups operating in the *comunas*, and eagerly joined its clandestine game of hide-and-seek with the military, but after several months the Army moved seriously against the neighborhood and the guerrillas swiftly withdrew, leaving Johnny and his friends to take the heat. Johnny lay low for a while, and then, through what he calls "a pioneering innovation," he found his lifework: he founded a *grupo de autodefensa*, or death squad, and he believes that it was the first of its kind in Medellín.

What got him started was the experience of seeing his younger brother Tony wounded in the course of a *banda* holdup at the corner grocery store in his neighborhood. The *banda* kids were attacking an old man, and Tony asked them to lay off. At this, one of the boys cracked a beer bottle in half and lunged at his throat, wounding him seriously but not fatally. Johnny says he watched the assault and felt unbearably humiliated by his own impotence, and that that emotion is what guided him to the idea of an *autodefensa*. What is more likely is that, after a lifetime of systematic humiliation and terror with no possibility of retribution, Johnny understood that he was finally facing an enemy he could actually take on.

Johnny has talked with reporters before, and he easily agreed to talk to me. We met in a small, crowded coffee shop downtown, and no one paid any attention to Johnny—a nondescript young man in bluejeans and a baggy T-shirt—even though he got noticeably tense, occasionally rhetorical, and at times almost giggly as he talked.

"I formed the *autodefensa* with a neighbor who had a wife and two kids and was sick of violence, too," he said.

"We didn't know how the two of us would manage to defeat more than two hundred kids who would be our sworn enemies, but we agreed that it was a risk we had to take. We recruited two other boys and started out on this endless task. On my block, one out of every three families had a son or a relative who was a *banda* member. We decided that the thing to do was to clean up the block first, and spread out from there. My idea was that we had to strike terror to the heart of the community in order to be effective. We went around and borrowed black shirts and trousers from some older men around the block, and a girl we knew stitched black hoods together for us. Then, one evening, around ten o'clock, we walked up to our first chosen victim, who was sitting on a stoop drinking beer, and we did it. We executed him. Then we ran around the corner, took our hoods and shirts off, and came back to help the family take the body away."

Johnny seemed both terribly frightened and amused at this part of the story. It was, he thinks now, an act of brilliance to remain in clandestinity while the kids from different *bandas* grew paranoid and started blaming each other for the wave of murders. In the first three months, he said, the *autodefensa* eliminated some thirty "undesirables." Then the work got easier, because the undesirables started eliminating each other, and those who didn't fled the neighborhood in terror. These days, he said, his *barrio* is a nice place to visit. It's *tranquilo*, calm, no problem.

Was his work finished, then?
"Oh, not at all. I don't know what makes these kids so perverse, but there always seem to be a few who like the bad life. Right now, there's a little spurt of activity, and, regrettably, I think we're going to have to take measures."

Shortly after my conversation with Johnny, a communiqué was delivered to the parish priest of Barrio Santa Cruz, in the northeastern *comuna*, with the information that someone would be at the Sunday sermon to make sure that the priest read the communiqué to the congregation. (He did.) The communiqué was signed by a group calling itself the GAM, or Grupo Amable Medellín, which translates as Nice Medellín Group. It said, in part,



"We alert all parents and the community in general that they should dialogue with their sons so that they will not continue smoking *basuco*, since this is harmful to their health and a bad example to growing children. . . . There will be a general cleanup, and neither sex nor religion will be respected. We will shoot anyone who does not obey this letter."

A few days later, on February 27th, a group that signs itself Robocop took credit for the recent murder of nine teen-agers, who were rounded up when they were playing soccer in the north-western *comuna*. Because they share a common target, one might conclude that groups like Robocop, Nice Medellín, and Johnny's *autodefensa* are friendly to the police, but there is no indication that these groups are linked to the police or even to each other. In fact, when I asked Johnny if he approved of the police's alleged involvement in the killing of the Prisco brothers and other murders, he was emphatic. "Cops are murderers," he said. "They massacre everybody. I'm a Christian, and I only take human life when it's absolutely necessary. Besides, there are some very respectable *bandas*—like the Priscos were, for example. They don't attack their own communities but only work outside. We don't touch them."

After our conversation was over, we left the coffee shop together. It was the height of the afternoon rush hour and I had trouble keeping Johnny in sight—an insignificant kid from the *comunas* without even a trendy T-shirt to stand out in. But Johnny knows perfectly well that he is an important person in Medellín, and I have seen pimply kids approach him on the street to seek his help in putting together death squads of their own. He is in demand, just like the numerous guerrilla leaders in Colombia whom journalists climb over mountains to get to. He makes guerrilla-like statements, as he did to me when he told me he had never been in love. "I preferred to devote my love to my homeland," he declared, holding himself very straight. He is a person of consequence, and he will continue to be so as long as he holds life-or-death power over a sizable number of people here. It's the only power he has, a power he shares with the punk killers who are his enemies, and it's enough to keep them all going for a long time—for as long, at least, as they live. —ALMA GUILLERMOPRIETO

THE NEW YORKER READER SERVICES

Use our convenient touch-tone phone line
to hear special messages about the
quality products and services listed below.
Call toll-free from any touch-tone phone:

1-800-447-6553

"Antiquing at Macy's"

Macy's & The New Yorker invite you to an evening of antiquing in New York City, with our special guest, noted interior designer, columnist, and author, Alexandra Stoddard. Wednesday, April 10th, 7:30 p.m., at Macy's Herald Square. Tickets are \$40.00 per person. All proceeds will benefit the Junior League.

For further information call:
30115

Windsor Court Hotel

The only Five Diamond hotel in New Orleans, where old world elegance meets southern hospitality. Of the 310 rooms, 254 are suites complete with kitchens or wet bars.

For free brochure:
30186

Karastan Rugs and Carpets

Maker of premier rugs and
carpets for more than 60 years.

For a color brochure:
30179

Doral Saturnia International Spa Resort Miami, Florida

Renew your spirits. Recharge your body. Make an investment in yourself at our renowned five-diamond spa resort.

For special rates and programs:
30119

ANA Hotel, Washington, D.C. Westin Hotels & Resorts

Special weekend getaway package for just \$129. Escape, relax and be pampered. Enjoy fine dining, shopping and sightseeing.

For more information:
30139

A D V E R T I S E M E N T