VC / TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1994

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LOS ANGELES COUNTY NEWS

So, When Do the Displays of Blinding, Biting Wit Begin, Poker Faces?

orby Walters is an ex-New York club owner and big-time agent who lives in a West Hollywood high-rise and knows every celebrity in town who is over 50.

He himself is 62, but because of a ferret-like ability to dart in many directions at once, he seems younger than anyone around him and talks in bursts of words that whistle by your ears like .50-caliber bullets. Every sentence he utters is a statement, including the way he answers the phone, "This is Norby," as though an announcement is forthcoming.

I met him through the comic Shelley Berman, who is my emotional alter ego. Almost everything p.o.'s Berman, but no one can make adversity funnier or doom more entertaining. When the world ends, I want to be with him.

Norby Walters started out as a bar boy in his dad's saloon and ended up owning one of the most popular clubs in Manhattan by the time he was 30.

"It was next to the Copa, and everyone came there," he said one day in his ornate, 11th-floor condo just off of Sunset Boulevard. "Frank, Dean, Sammy, Steve and Eydie, wise guys, Playboy bunnies, they all hung out at Norby's place. . . . It was Hollywood's vision of a New York nightclub." Unfortunately, he added, moving around the room

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But that wasn't that for Norby, who went on to create his own talent agency and soon was representing people like Dionne Warwick and groups like New Kids on the Block.

He sold the business after an attempt to be a sports agent got him big legal problems. (The charges were thrown out of court.) But he still maintains the persuasive mannerisms of a deal maker, always moving, always computing, never unbusy. Even his handshake makes you feel like you've just signed Madonna to a world concert tour.

A small, white-haired guy with oversized glasses, Norby moved to L.A. in '92 "because where else can you play tennis in February?" He keeps busy putting celebrities together with charities, which he does for nothing, and arranging the players for his Tuesday Night Poker Party.

If you ever get famous and live to get older, there is a small chance that you will be invited to play poker at Norby's place on a Tuesday night. He's got a

vices.

ship Alliance, Food 4 Less, Arco,

Ticketmaster and Kaufman &

Broad. The engineering giant Fluor

Daniel has volunteered system de-

sign and project management ser-

The alliance says its combined

effort is expected to generate one of

the largest private gifts ever to the

list of about 35 Famous People who play in groups of eight, including guys like Milton Berle, Mel Torme, Sid Caesar and Tony Curtis.

They play a dollar-ante, dealer's choice game so that nobody gets hurt and everybody has a good time. You can't always tell they're having a good time, but since nobody walks out in the middle of a hand, I guess they are.

I say that because I hung out at one of their poker games where hardly a clever word was uttered. I've been around celebrities often enough to know they're pretty ordinary people when they're off camera, picking their teeth and scratching their behinds, even as you and I.

But in pitching the group to me, Norby made it sound like the evening was nothing less than a Broadway revue, with explosions of wit bursting over the poker table like fireworks on Independence Day.

That's the way agents are, now that I think about it. I remember listening to my own agent selling me over the phone like I was Ernest Hemingway's spiritual heir, then hanging up, turning to me and saying, "Try not to dump this one into the toilet, kid."

The poker players this Tuesday night consisted of Berman, Charles Bronson, Elliot Gould, Charles Durning, Robert Wuhl, Dom DeLuise, George Segal

and Vince Edwards, who used to be Ben Casey back in television's early Cenozoic Era.

They are all talented people, but wit was conspicuous by its absence. Actors without scripts are like hookers without mattresses—there's nothing to fall back on.

The funniest comment was Wuhl's observation that Charles Bronson is Charles Bronson because he can throw a dollar into the pot without looking. Later, Bronson repeated the character trait by folding without looking.

The game was played on a glass-topped table under an ornate chandelier, while a gold-plated statue of the Lion of Judah watched solemnly from a place on the floor near a couch.

Norby scooted around the room between hands, and even when he was sitting there was a kind of kinetic energy about him. He was always on the alert, like something might drop from the sky at any moment and carry him off.

No doubt the wit began to fly shortly after I left. Shelley Berman, who always looks as though he's just discovered a worm in his baked apple, told me later he lost money that night. That made him happy. Go figure.

and answering telephone calls, two guys were shot there in '65, and that was that.

\$8 Million Raised for New LAPD Computers

By CHING-CHING NI TIMES STAFF WRITER

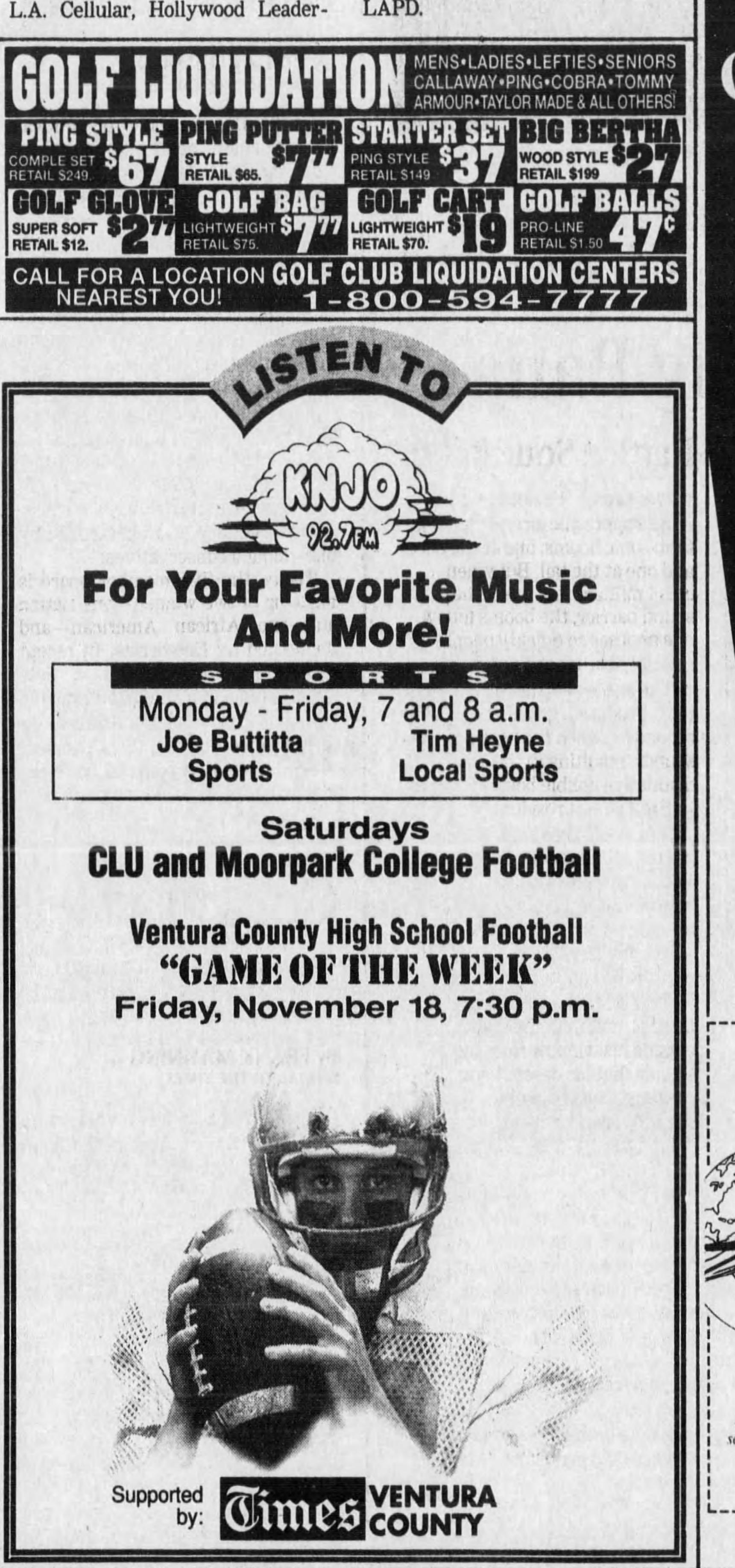
A private sector campaign to computerize the Los Angeles Police Department has raised \$8 million of its \$15-million target in three months, city officials said Monday. The Mayor's Alliance for a Safer L.A., a coalition of local business and civic leaders formed in August by Mayor Richard Riordan, Police Chief Willie L. Williams and the head of Kaufman & Broad Home Corp., Bruce Karatz, hopes to computerize the department, whose officers currently spend up to 40% of their day completing paperwork. The alliance hopes to start purchasing equipment as early as January.

The group on Monday also launched an 800 number—(800) 4-SAFE-LA—to encourage other businesses and individuals to contribute. The money is expected to buy 1,700 computer workstations as well as electronic mail and voice mail equipment for the department's 18 police stations, four traffic bureaus and administrative headquarters at Parker Center.

"The computers will save over 75% of [officers' paper processing]

officers to the streets of Los Angeles every day, doing community-based policing and making the city safer."

The 16 major private donors included the Ahmanson Foundation, which gave \$3 million, and Blue Cross of California, which gave \$1.5 million. Other donors of more than \$100,000 were William Keck Jr., L.A. Cellular, Hollywood Leader-



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time," Riordan said in front of a 20-foot paper pyramid symbolizing the amount of paperwork processed by the LAPD each month. "Computers will add over 350 police

FLEISS:

Continued from B10

parents and younger brother sat in the front row of the courtroom, Fleiss did not turn around. When court was adjourned, her mother embraced her.

Since her arrest in September after she tested positive for consuming stimulants and depressants in violation of probation, Fleiss has been assigned to a Pasadena-based drug rehab program.

Fleiss' arrest for pandering last year set Los Angeles atwitter, mostly because of widespread speculation about her alleged clientele, which was said to include stars and studio executives. But for faithful followers of the Fleiss saga, the true denouement may not occur until January, when she and her father, pediatrician Paul Fleiss, are scheduled to go on trial on federal charges of money laundering, bank fraud and alleged conspiracy to conceal the young woman's income from her prostitution business.

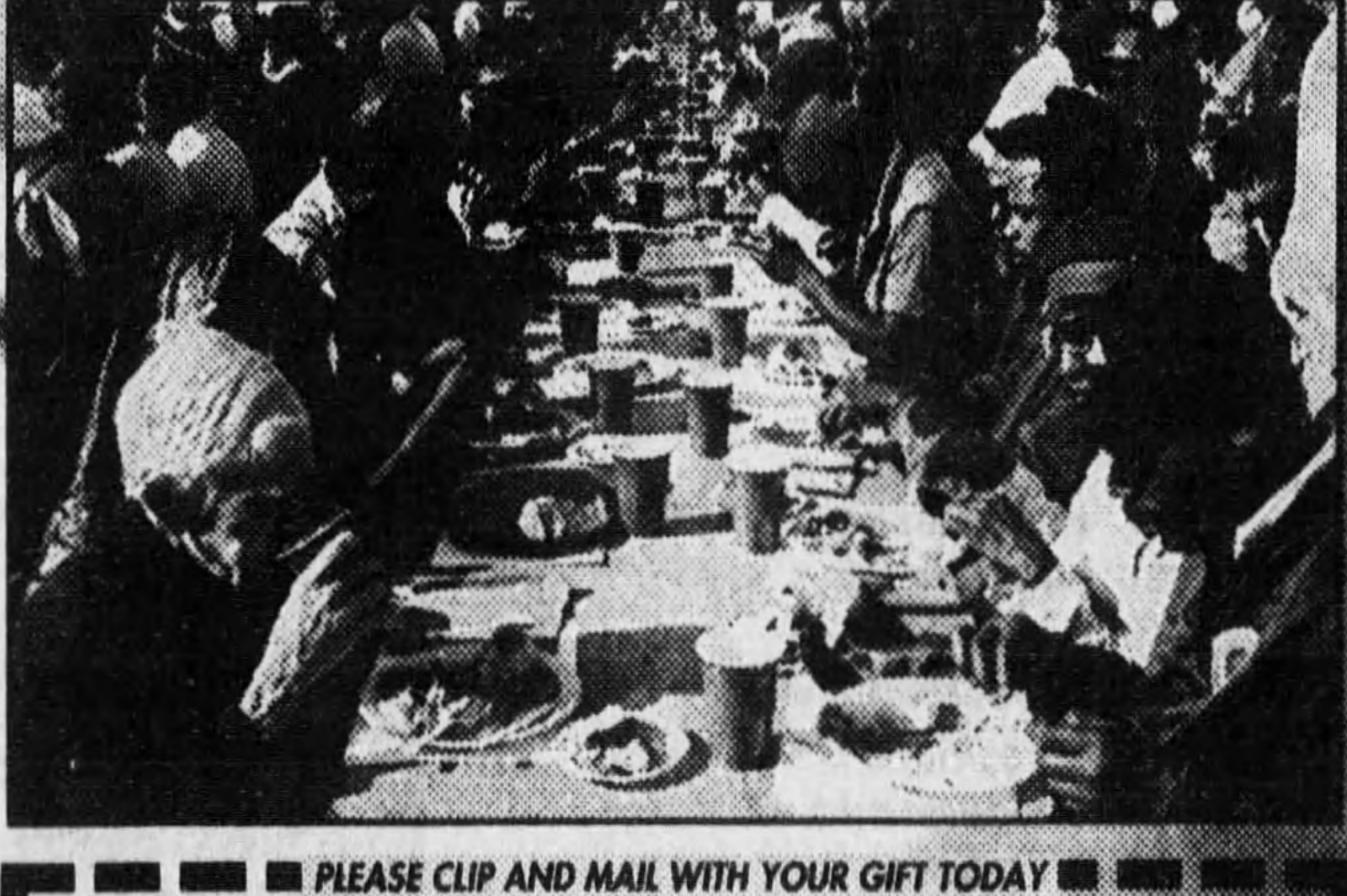
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