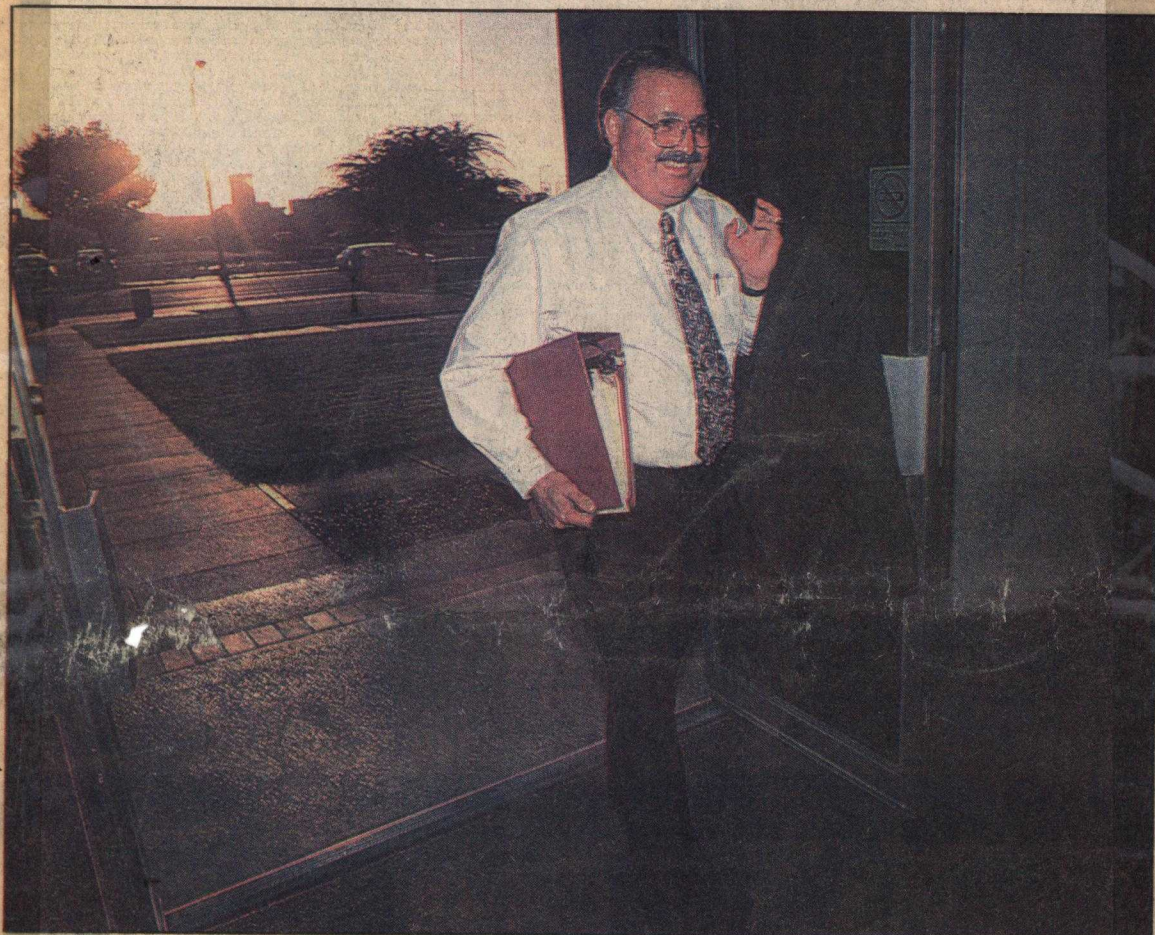


New mayor



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Tony Campos, the son of a Pajaro Valley fieldworker and the first Latino elected to the Watsonville City Council, took office as mayor today, vowing to turn the council to a more politically moderate direction. See story on Page A-10.

Campos becomes Watsonville mayor

By **MARIANNE BIASOTTI**
Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — After being shut out from the city's top post for the past five years, Councilman Tony Campos became mayor Tuesday.

The farmworker's son turned real estate agent was the first Latino to be elected to the Watsonville council. He served from 1987-1989, lost a re-election bid, and was elected again in 1991. Conservative in his politics, he did not have the support to become mayor on the liberal-leaning council until Tuesday, when Dennis Osmer joined the body and provided the deciding vote. Mayor Lowell Hurst announced his withdrawal from the running last Friday.

Campos, 50, said he believes in the American Dream because he has lived it and wants to provide that opportunity to anyone willing to work hard.

The source of his passion for the city is simple: "I was born and raised here. I've seen this place with floods and earthquakes. My mom and dad are buried here."

Campos remembers growing up alongside his field-

worker father, picking numerous crops in Pajaro Valley fields and driving a tractor at age 7. He worked as a cabinetmaker, then landed a job loading lettuce boxes onto railroad cars at Salinas' Unikoool company, where he worked 14 years. While still in his 20s, Campos saved enough money to start investing in property.

"What I lack in brains I have in common sense, and I'm not afraid to take a risk," Campos said.

Now the head of Campos Real Estate, a subsidiary of Coldwell Banker, Campos and his wife, Becky, have built one of the most aggressive residential real estate businesses in the area, said fellow real estate agent Chuck Allen.

"He and his wife earned every penny they have. He's an example of someone who can grow up in Watsonville, work intelligently, save and serve to be an example for many others in the community," said Allen, of Landmark Real Estate Company.

Campos also owns many properties in the area.

Supporters packed City Hall and overflowed into the lobby to watch Campos become mayor.