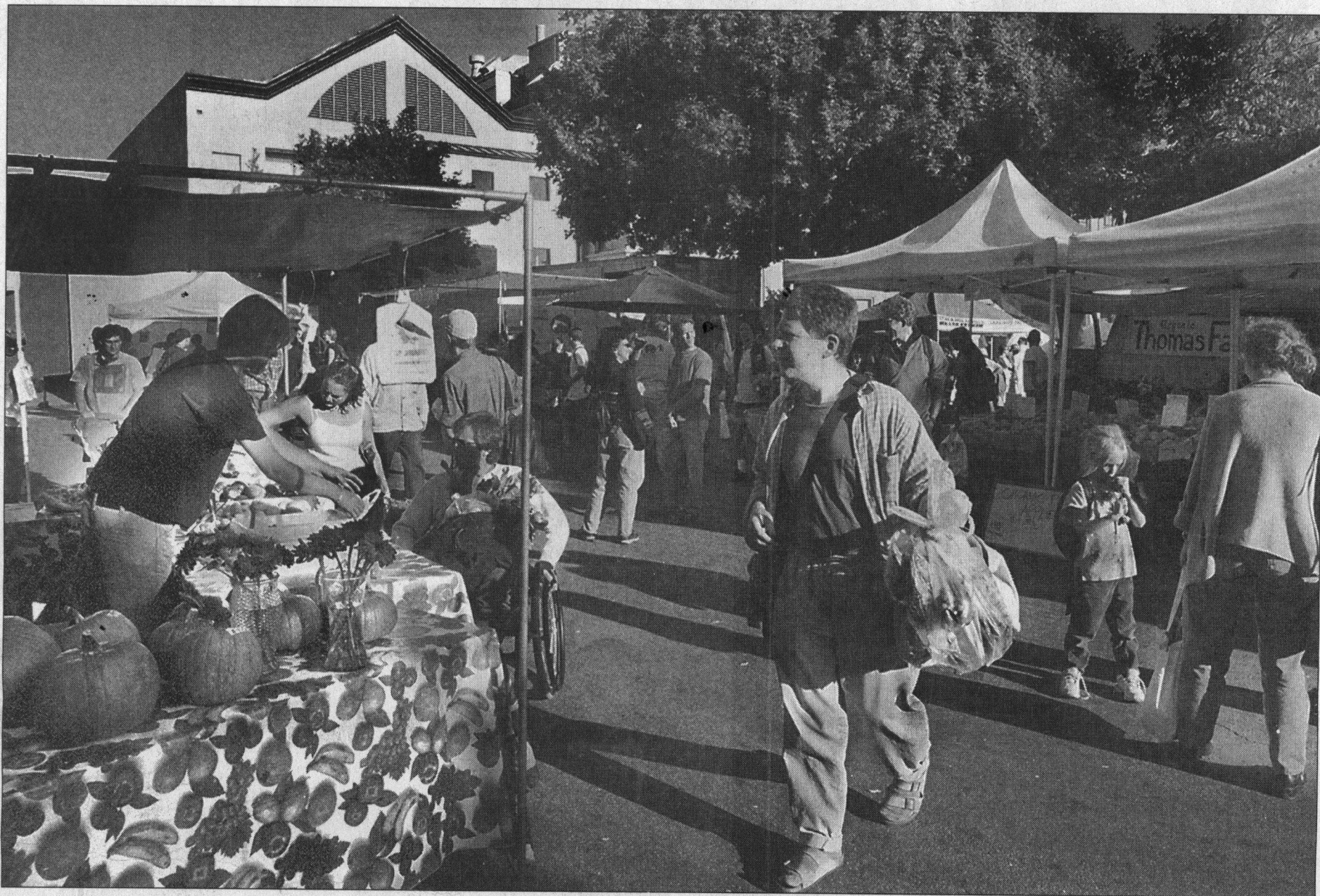


## THE HONEYMOON ENDS



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Shoppers peruse the produce and other offerings of Santa Cruz's downtown Farmers Market on Wednesday. Janet Blaser recently resigned as director of the market.

# Manager of Farmers Market resigns, criticizing council

By DAN WHITE  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Managing the Santa Cruz Community Farmers Market was hardly organic bliss for Janet Blaser, who resigned this week after five months on the job.

**SANTA CRUZ** Blaser, a food writer, said Wednesday she took the position to feed and nurture her community but found herself in the center of "a very public fiasco."

She said she tried to address complaints about hippie drummers and others disrupting the market, only to have the problem escalate.

"In Santa Cruz, it is not politically correct to have rules," she said.

Her temporary replacement is Scott Yundt, previously the market's assistant manager.

Blaser said the City Council and other agencies made her take a hard look at noise and drummers blocking access to the market but would not back her up when she tried to take action.

"If a group of people like this gathered around any other special event in the city, it would never be allowed," she said. "The city has failed to provide a safe and regulated atmosphere to have an event downtown."

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JANET BLASER, FORMER DIRECTOR, FARMERS MARKET

While growers at the market give the drummers mixed reviews, some fear noise complaints will eventually force the city to revoke the market's permit.

Drummers and whirling dancers, who look like the crowd at old Grateful Dead shows, were a noisy throng in the past, but only a dozen were at the market at 3 p.m. Wednesday.

One Wednesday drummer said louder percussionists now avoid the market because of a "changing vibe."

Drummers had mixed reactions to Blaser's departure. One reacted with a big smile. Another, who called himself Jah Kind, said he recently had a friendly talk with Blaser about the noise level, and they seemed to have an understanding.

Blaser said she got along fine with some drummers but added that some people at a recent market called her "fascist" and said "Heil, Hitler" to her.

After one confrontation, she hired a bodyguard, a gesture her most outspoken critic, activist Robert Norse, dismissed as overkill.

Councilman Mark Primack, the City Council's appointee to the market board, agreed Blaser was "placed in a very uncomfortable situation," and the city needed to do more to address problems at the market.

Norse was arrested and cited for trespassing last month for circulating a petition inside the market urging people to support the drumming crowd.

Norse has said Blaser is part of an effort to make the market exclusionary, banning young hippies and free speech. He could not be reached to comment Wednesday.

Sandra Ward, market board president, said he regrets Blaser's resignation, which Blaser sent in an e-mail to board members Sunday.

"She mended many bridges and created order out of the chaos that existed when she arrived," Ward said. "She faced a no-win situation that escalated very rapidly."

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