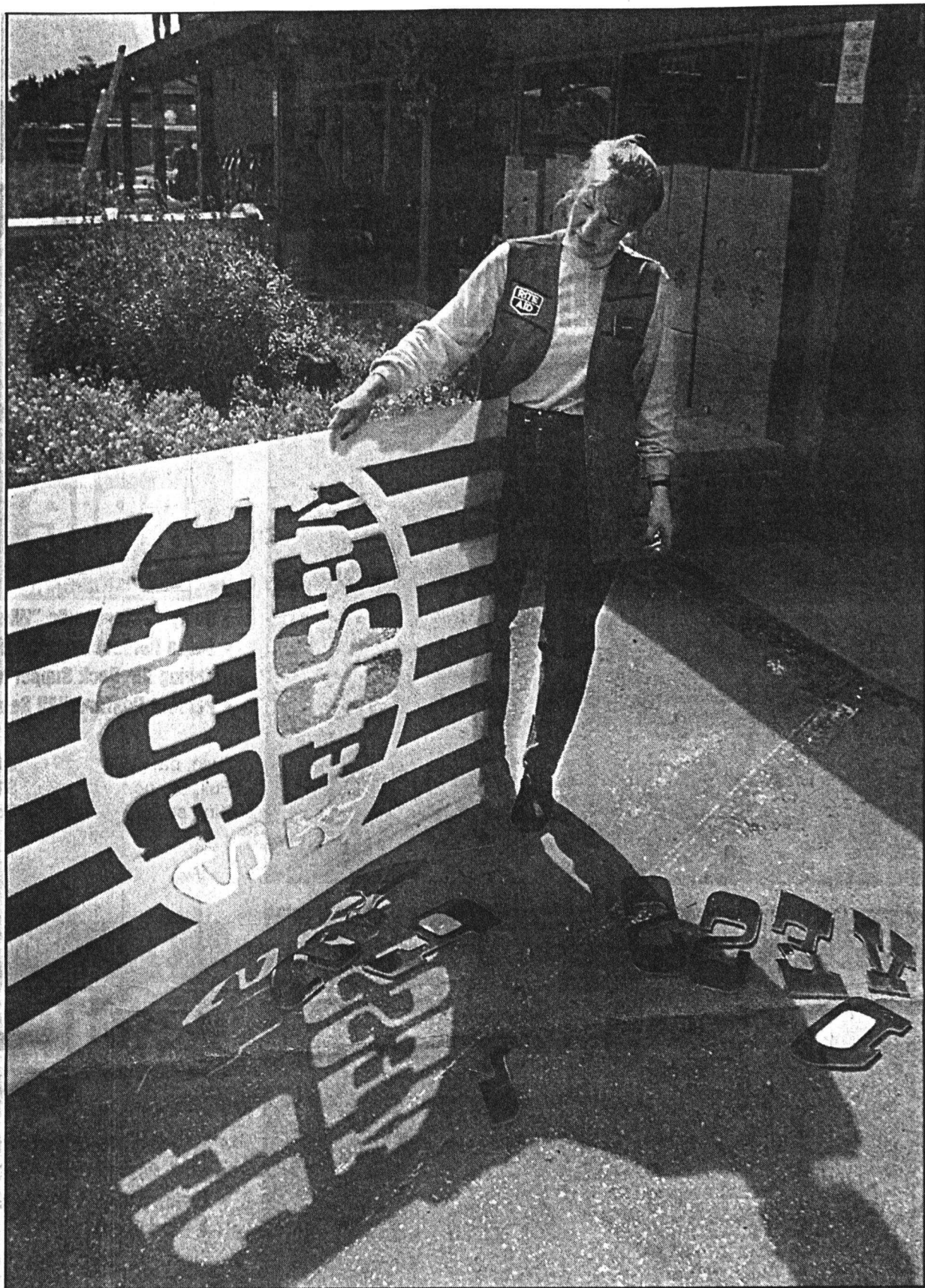


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Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Rite Aid drug store assistant manager Sherry Piacentini examines one of the old Vessey drug signs after it was removed Thursday.

Vessey drug store signs off

Sentinel staff report

APTOS — Loyal customers of "Vessey Drugs" will finally have to face reality.

Vessey's locally famous but misleading sign overhanging the drug store at Rancho Del Mar shopping center was finally removed Thursday. From now on, the store's name is Rite Aid.

Vessey hasn't really been Vessey since 1995, when Thrifty Payless bought the store. But the Vessey sign, known for its chocolate-brown lettering and cinnamon striping, stayed on the facade. Then, Rite Aid bought Thrifty Payless in 1996. They also bought the rights to

a name change.

"It was going to happen anyway," said supervisor Sandy Janus, an "old-timer" who worked for original owner Robert Vessey, who opened his store in 1961. "The sign was going to come down. (Rite Aid) has really been pushing for the name change."

She said that the store is not very different from when it was Vessey Drugs. "We have more stock," she said. "And we got new doors. There haven't been any major changes stock-wise."

But it still gets confusing. "We still have customers saying, 'What? It's not Vessey anymore?'"