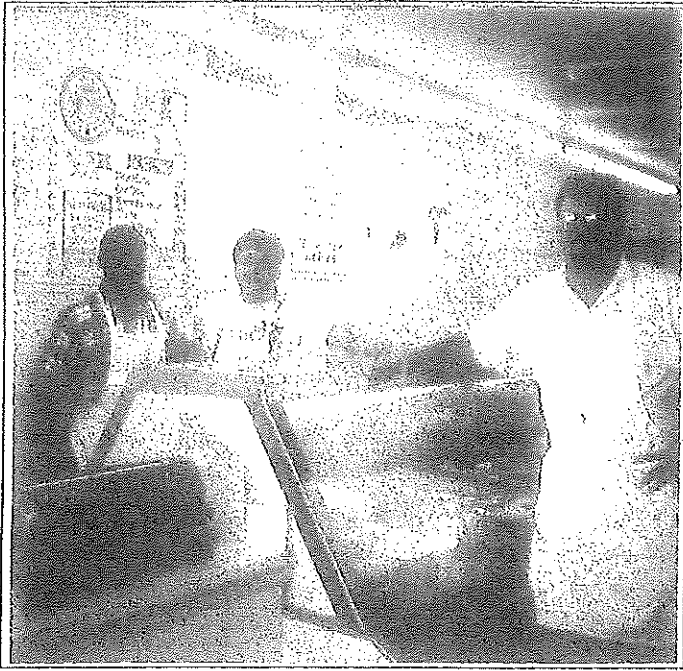


Visit Shields Meat Market — They're The Best!



by Dick Flunderburke

When you visit Shields Meat Market in downtown Decatur, you might see a real meat locker which has been in active service since the store opened in this location over fifty years ago. More importantly, customers get excellent personalized help, the freshest chicken, beef, ham and sausage, and a variety of other customized service.

Although a Shields Market has been in Atlanta since the late 1800s and in Decatur since the 1930s, the business is now owned and operated by Geoffrey Irwin. Trained in the business in upstate New York, Irwin has been in Atlanta since the early 1980s and in Decatur since 1986. He believes that the "closeness between merchant and customer is one of the biggest advantages of the small meat market over the chain stores, where each order can be customized to the needs of each customer."

A quick glance at the extensive display of meats at the 143 Sycamore Street location [across from the MARTA station near Church Street] is just the beginning of an unique shopping experience. Fresh chickens arrive three times a week from a supplier in Gainesville and are never frozen. According to one local customer, the taste of this fresh chicken far surpasses anything she has bought elsewhere. In addition, Shields' meat cutters

prepare their own barbecue pork and a selection of sausages made to Irwin's own, special recipes. Other specialty items include meatloaf, meatballs, ham loaf, and ham patties.

Along with the many types of pork and ham from baby back ribs to loin roasts, Irwin is especially proud of the long standing specialty Shields has maintained in preparing aged beef. None of the market's beef is boxed or pre-cut. It arrives directly from Iowa and Nebraska and is hand selected by Irwin and hung in house. Steaks and other cuts are hand cut to exacting specifications for retail and special orders can be called in or made in person. Irwin likes to emphasize that in taking an order, he or his staff find out "exactly what they are doing so we can give them what they need" for whatever occasion is being planned.

This type of service has been the hallmark of Shields since Charles Hazlerigs, Sr. opened the store on Sycamore in 1947 after returning from duty in World War II. It was named "Best of Atlanta Meat Market" by Atlanta Magazine and has been praised in other publications such as the Atlanta Business Chronicle, Knife & Fork, and Southern Homes Magazine. Of course, in recent years, Irwin has added some other significant ways to provide top quality products. For special events, meat can be cooked to order, including smoked hams, pork roasts, chicken, ribs, prime rib and leg of lamb. This can usually be done with one day's notice [three days notice during the fast approaching holiday season]. For more informal parties, Shields will prepare party trays for any size group starting at \$15.00 and with all the meats cut to order.

Finally, if you are just around for lunch, sandwiches can be purchased each week day except Tuesday from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Shields is open five days a week from 8:30 to 5:30 and is closed on Tuesday and Sunday.

SHIELDS MARKET

The Old Way Is Still The Best Way

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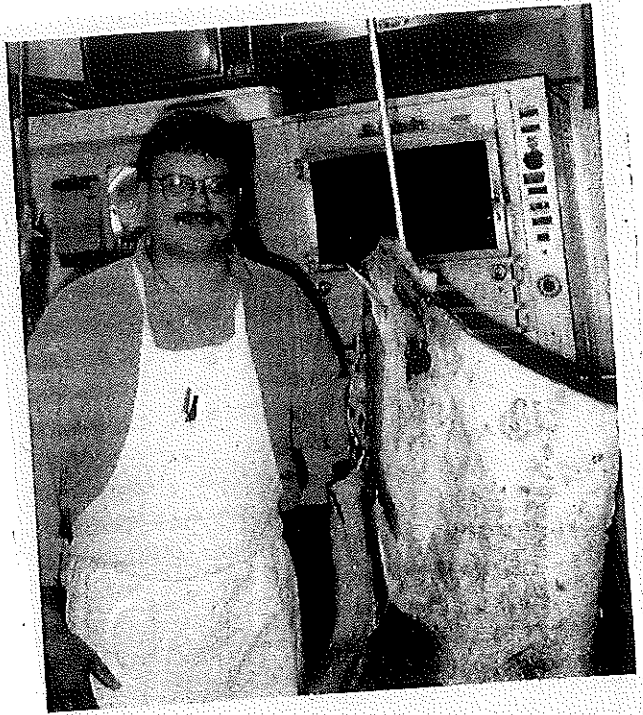
When you step through the door into **Shields Market** on the Decatur Square, you sense you're experiencing the best of a by-gone era. A butcher shop where you can have your steak cut and wrapped to order is a place out of time. Only a few markets where you open a refrigerator door to see hanging sides of beef remain in the entire country. The store appears much as it did when it opened in 1947, all the way to the wood shavings on the cutting room floor.

Some people do things "the old-fashioned way" out of nostalgia. Others are simply unwilling to accept change. And a few do it the old way because it is the best way. This last category is where you'll find Shields Market.

Shields Market is among a very small class of meat specialists who age their beef in-house. "It's like aging cheese," said Geoffrey K. Irwin, the market's proprietor. "Aging takes all the moisture out, and gives the meat a flavor and tenderness unequaled to anything you'll buy in a store." "It's the difference between eating a green apple and a mellow apple," said employee Gene Swan. Those claims are well supported by food critics and loyal customers. "No bones about it," said Elliot Mackle of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, "Shields beef is superb."

You'll find much more than superb beef, though. Customers are greeted at the door with the aroma of rotisserie-roasted meats. A Thanksgiving turkey or Christmas ham slowly turned in the market's roaster is some of the best food you'll put in your mouth. The handmade sausages carry the G.K. Irwin label as an assurance you are buying the very best in quality. In fact, every piece of meat is the best money can buy. The chickens are bought locally three times a week, packed on ice (not frozen), and washed twice daily to maintain freshness. Meat is trimmed so closely that it can lose up to 50% of its original weight in excess fat. The beef, pork, lamb, veal and even the hotdogs are from the best suppliers in the country. You pay a little more for this quality, but as one customer stated, "Once you start buying here, you can't turn back."

"I do things the old-fashioned way," said Geoffrey, "because it is still the best way."



Geoffrey Irwin