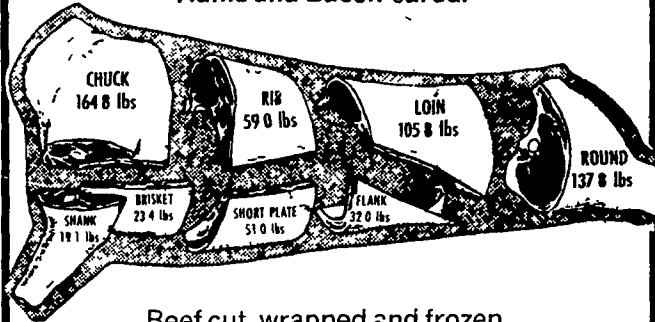




These half-bushel boxes of fresh peaches were selling for four dollars each at the Baltimore Wholesale Produce Market.

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Wee hours

[Continued from Page 110]

"I'm getting cantaloupes, peaches, and cabbage for my customers," he explained. "And, I've brought a few things we have an abundance of to sell, mainly eggplants and peppers."

Stepping onto the porch-style loading docks that run the length of the market buildings, a visitor is instantly enveloped in the mouth-watering smells of a garden fresh salad and the luscious aromas of ripening fruits. Everywhere there are stacks of boxes, baskets and crates, rounded full of fresh goods in a kaleidoscope of colors and shapes.

A frantic atmosphere, reminiscent of cartoons depicting lady buyers grabbing from bargain

basement sale tables, surrounds the buyers rushing in and out of brokerage areas. Instant decisions must be made - any buyer who stands and debates very long over an offering of produce may find a "sold" tag slapped on it before his eyes. Moments later, the crate or bag will be hurried onto waiting trucks by fork-lifts which hustle around the docks like ants on a hill.

"If you see something you want, sit on it!" grinned one buyer.

During Lancaster Farming's early August visit to the all-night market, the abundance of mid-Atlantic Summer produce was just

arriving at the market. Sections sat filled with peaches, carrying a wholesale tag of a minimum of four dollars per half-bushel. Nectarines were bringing six to seven dollars per half-bushel. Shiny, fat red peppers, a premium, in-demand item, were seven dollars a basket. Hay-bale size bags of carrots and baskets of every size and shape tomato imaginable filled the docks.

Sweet corn, hit by dry weather in producing states, was going for one dollar per dozen. Cases of cantaloupes, in varying stages of ripeness, were being grabbed up and moved by the dozens.

Apples from Washington and radishes from Arizona perched next to pineapples from Mexico. Big bins groaned at the sides from the weight of ripening water-melons. There was even a few Georgia peanuts for sale.

Some rather unusual items, catering the gourmet and ethnic cooking demands, could be found among the more commonplace market vegetables and fruits. Okra, edible podded peas (sugar peas), mushrooms, green bunching onions, avacados, leeks, spicy hot red peppers, and assorted cooking greens were available to the buyer who searched carefully. Casawba melons, with their brilliant yellow, deeply wrinkled skins, and glistening green honeydews arrived packed in padded, protective shipping crates.

Gates to the market are not opened until 3 a.m., by that time a line of waiting trucks has already formed on the street leading to the parking lot. Vehicles are

charged a one dollar admittance fee, or daily buyers can purchase a yearly admittance pass.

Although the wholesale market remains open through 9 a.m., two hours after opening time most of the activity is over. Trucks have been loaded and sped on their way to retail outlets all over the surrounding states. The pick of the day's shipments is gone. Market offices settle down to a work-day of tabulating and bookkeeping chores. Within a few hours, though, trucks and trains will again begin delivering loads of highly-perishable luscious food for a well-fed American public; and under a starry sky, the market gates will open on another business day.

Tractor driving winners named

STEWARTSTOWN, Pa. - John Marsteller, Jr., RD2 Stewartstown placed first in the 4-H tractor driving contest held at the John Marsteller, Sr. farm, Stewartstown.

Placing second thru fifth consecutively was Peter King, Delta; Gary Welsh, East Berlin; Kevin Laughman, Thomasville; Tim Eisenhart, Thomasville. The eleven members participated in backing of a four wheel wagon and driving a two wheel wagon through an obstacle course and backing into a stall.

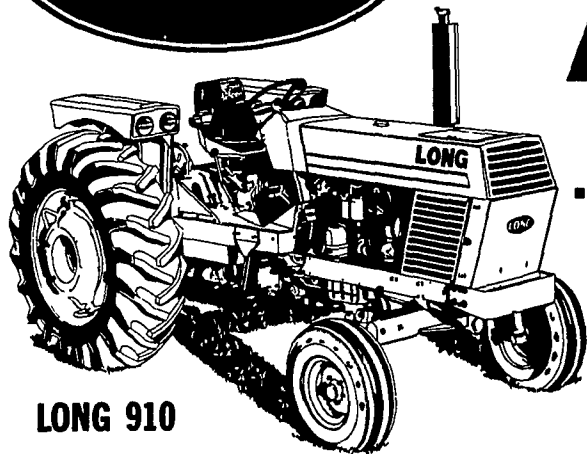
Marsteller will participate in the State 4-H tractor driving contest to be held in conjunction with Ag Progress Days on August 24th, at Rock Spring, near State College, Pa.

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