



Crayton Brothers Won't Bow to Technology By Pat Black - Hays County Citizen - April 14, 1977

In a ritual older than the first settlers, every spring the Crayton brother, Billy [Baylor] and Bruce, hitch up their mules and plow the land they own besides Bishop Road. Billy is 81 years old and Bruce is 83, but they show sign of slowing down in determination to continue farming by traditional methods.

"The old way is going to beat. You watch I tell you," Bruce says with a grin. "I can starve out anybody I want to." The brothers claim that the end of the small farmers was caused by the advent of tractors. "They talk of tractor salesmen coming out in their bow ties" to convince farmers that the use of a gasoline-powered machine could increase production.

They'd tell you that you don't have to feed your workers. With a tractor, one man could do all the work. It was all lies. "It put us in bad shape," Billy said.

Billy Crayton thinks that farmers made a fatal mistake when they mortgaged their land to buy expensive tractors. The crops from a little tract of land wouldn't pay off their equipment and the farmers lost their land. He noted that the only small farmers left are usually in a government program. "I can plant anything I want. The government doesn't tell me nothing," he said. Mules are the key to the Crayton's independence.

The Crayton's use four mules and a riding plow to turn over the land. They also have a harrow, a hay rake, and other equipment, which can be pulled by animals. The Blue Ribbon plow is 40 years old, and a replacement would be hard to find.

The mules; Jake, Julie, Pete and Repeat are now about four years old and are still learning the job of pulling farm equipment. "Them mules is all crazy, and they're wild," Billy said.

According to the Craytons, mules can no longer be obtained in the San Marcos area. Two of their mules came from Mexico, and two from Refugio. Billy said that the mules could start to work at age two and continue through their expected live of 40 years.



Members of the Crayton family have lived on the same farm for at least three generations. Jim Crayton, the father of Billy and Bruce, was given the land at the end of the Civil War by his father and master, John Crayton.

“My daddy was a slave. His daddy owned him. My Grandma was an Indian. He give Poppa 160 acres of land and stocked it cattle and horses. We’ve had it ever since,” Billy said. Jim Crayton was the father of 18 children. The family dwindled over the years and some members moved away. Leaving Billy, Bruce and one other brother on the farm.

“The baby boy is living. He’s 78 years old. His name is Ben Crayton.” Billy said, adding that Ben spent the past two years in a resting home. “He’s doing alright, I’m going to bring him home in a few days. ”The farm to nieces and nephews when the Crayton brothers are gone. Ben is a lifelong bachelor. Billy is married but has not had any children. Bruce is another story. “Bruce has had five wives, but he left them all. He’s mean. It’s his Indian blood,” Billy said.

Watching the Crayton brothers at work in the field, it seems that they will go on forever. The crops planned for this year include corn, sudan grass and sorghum. The family used to raise cattle at their place and at another farm near Wimberley. They still raise a few hogs each year.

Bruce and Billy Crayton are slender, weathered and wise. Their age has not diminished their ability to work or to talk. If they have a secret, it seems to be embodied in Billy’s willingness to go on performing hard, simple task:

“You have to make something out of this land by turning it. If you don’t, you can’t do nothing with it. It’s been a job, I tell you.”