

Life

It's a good day when Willie asks for seconds

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English

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-Today's deep thought

As mulled by Sylvia Cooling, of Bloomington:

"Here's a good business on this time of year: Rent-A-Jacket, available in stores, offices and restaurants with freezing air conditioning." - Brian Bowman's latest cookout. He whipped together some jalapeno cornbread, purple-hulled peas with snaps, a summer squash casserole, blueberry/blackberry cobbler, cooked up 150 pounds of beef short ribs, 100 pounds of briskets and 100 organic chickens in a Texas-sized bash.

Then, after being given the official word ("they're ready to eat") by Willie Nelson's personal valet, Bowman served it all to 300 attendees including Nelson, the music iconoclast, ex-Texas governor Ann Richards, columnist Molly Ivins, actor Kris Kristofferson and - heck - an entire Texas town, too.

Top compliment: Willie went back for seconds.

"It was chaos but very fun," says Bowman, 49, of Bloomington.

The event? Last week's rededication of a church in tiny Abbott, Texas (pop: 300) where Nelson grew up. Willie served as official host; Brian was the cook.

Nelson and Bowman? They've been pals for 25 years, since they met on Nelson's personal 9-hole golf course in Texas.

Not much of a golfer, Brian was playing only because he'd been invited. But after the round, the foursome went into Nelson's neighboring recording studio where they all were hungry and Brian (who has loved to cook since a young child) offered to whip up some lunch.

Nelson was so impressed, he said to Brian: "Wow, you do that well. Maybe you'd like to come to work for me."

And Brian said, "Well, it's gotta beat playing golf."

Married to a State Farm exec, Bowman moved from Austin to Bloomington a few years ago. But Nelson has not forgotten him and called him a couple months ago to ask if he'd serve lunch at the church rededication back in Abbott.

Bowman, we should add, is referred to by Nelson and his crew as "Bloo Boy."

That stands for Bloomington Boy. - And you thought the Beatles stormed America. Here's an indication of just how badly those Japanese beetles are infiltrating your bushes and trees out front.

At Growing Grounds, the popular gardening center in Bloomington, they usually sell about 150 beetle traps. That's in one entire year.

But in just one day last week?

They sold 148. That cleaned them out.

That was after they'd sold 300 the week before, which cleaned them out.

Now even suppliers have been cleaned out.

As the Beatles once sang, "HELP!" Sometimes instead of God bless America, it's gawd-bless-it!: So it wasn't budget cuts and/or cost-savings that caused Coldwell Banker-Heart of America Realtors to not plunk a flag in your yard this past Fourth of July.

It was, umm, the public.

Each year, after attempting to criss-cross the Twin Cities with 15,000 small plastic U.S. flags, the real estate firm, say company folk, was hit with calls about vandalism, complaints about not getting everyone's yard, or calls and a swath of letters to the editor complaining that although a nice gesture, the flag ultimately was being abused because some homeowners would not rescue them from their yard and they would end up as swirling trash in the gutter.

"Finally," says Larry Hundman, "we thought we'd had enough of those."

One positive: Hundman has proposed giving the cities the money for five years worth of flags so it can be used to buy flags and

standards that could be draped along Veterans Parkway and Main Street on patriotic holidays.

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