J. Alvin has always been known as a place where students come together for fun and community. Of course, it was not always easy to get in the dorm. In the early decades of JBU’s existence, school rules forbade men and women from entering each other’s living space and placed strict regulations on when they could socialize in other locations. They had to find creative ways to be together as a student body.

Once a year, each residence hall took turns hosting an open dorm event which allowed the rest of campus to see their living quarters. It was an exciting time for everyone involved. Residents hurried to make repairs and clean in preparation for the big night. Occupants could win prizes in a variety of different categories such as “best décor”. The men of J. Alvin apparently knew how to show their guests a good time. One account of open dorm mentions live music and large quantities of punch and cake. Visitors saw rooms decorated with bear skin rugs and fled in terror as rubber lizards dropped from door frames.

Closed doors were not the only thing J. Alvinites needed to overcome in order to promote community. During the early nineties, students disagreed about whether JBU should participate in the celebration of Halloween. Some worried that Halloween’s connection to paganism might be incompatible with the values of a Christian university. In order to provide a solution to this controversy, SGA organized a school-wide “harvest party,” hosted in the J. Alvin atrium. Students came together to enjoy a fun evening of games, inflatables, apple bobbing, and pie-eating and costume contests.

Another way J. Alvin brought new entertainment onto campus was by hosting Air Jam, a yearly lip sync/dance competition which took place in the atrium. For more than a decade students enjoyed watching the creative talents of their friends as they performed new renditions of popular music enlivened by their own choreography and costumes. At one point, Air Jam was even rescheduled to take place during homecoming so that alumni could attend as well.

“The Thing That Bands Play At” brought more music to campus with an all-night music festival which started in J. Alvin and spread outside. Attendees ate dinner, listened to student bands and played on inflatables. Others took advantage of the opportunity to create a popular music festival atmosphere and spent the night camping outside.

The social function of the dorm has changed over the years. Open dorm is now a weekly and much less formal event. In addition, Air Jam has been replaced by Mock Rock, which takes place in the cathedral. Still, between Christmas and Halloween parties, lectures and concerts, students still find ways to come together in J. Alvin.

Milestones

March 4, 1994
JBU announces beginning of paper recycling program.

April 5, 1991
Men’s basketball team wins NCCAA championship.

April 4, 1977
Construction of new wing of Mayfield begins.
Cupid has struck, and a JBU grounds worker and a Mayfield custodian were the target. On a cold day in December 2003, Ken Covell was planting trees along one of the sidewalks in Mayfield. Cindy Harrington decided to bring him a cup of hot chocolate. She said she didn’t really think anything would come of it, but actually it “started everything”. Now the Mayfield courtyard holds a permanent place in the hearts of Ken and Cindy Covell, because that is where the newlyweds first laid eyes on one another.

This is a story of JBU love at its best. Ken said that he was aware of Cindy a month before they met. Cindy had been working at JBU for about two weeks when he heard her voice on the correspondence radio. The workers were discussing Cindy’s 8-year-old son, Duane, and some discipline problems he was having at school. Someone asked her, “Is that the innocent-looking boy that I met a few weeks ago?” Cindy responded, “No, he’s just like the rest of these men in this world.” Ken sensed that there was a need in her family. His initial thoughts were “Oh Lord, not me. I’ll just pray or do something else.”

After they met in the Mayfield courtyard, it was another two months before they talked again. This time it was at Cindy’s church in Oklahoma during a revival event. The first night she was in the front of the church praying. “I had been praying so hard for God to send me somebody,” she said. She said that God told her to look up, and there he was. Her initial reaction was “oh God, no.” But after she wrestled with God over it and found peace, she walked to the back of the church where he was sitting alone and politely asked him to sit with her. Kevin said that he found out about the revival through Cindy’s pastor and went to the church primarily to see her. Afterwards, they talked and made plans to spend time together that weekend, and it never stopped after that.

Their love for each other continued to blossom through the spring. After their fifth month of marriage counseling, they married at Antioch Church in Siloam Springs on July 31. “I’m been the happiest I’ve ever been,” Ken said. The couple said that God holds their marriage together. They also put a strong emphasis on open communication. “We make every decision together,” Cindy said. Every day they have a lunch date with each other at noon in the cafeteria. “It’s our little down time to be by ourselves,” Cindy said. They talk about plans for the night, what they will have for dinner, but mainly they are able to just “enjoy each other.”