

From Trinity University's *Trinitonian*, 2006

Professors rock out

Medina Mudd Band continues legacy with TU faculty Lyn Belisle, Bill Kurtin, John Burke

By: Elizabeth Ward

Posted: 3/24/06

Those students who have heard of the Medina Mudd Band are a lucky few. A band that plays mostly progressive country music and plays at fund-raisers, bar mitzvahs, funerals and fiestas, its eclectic style is not what makes it special. Rather, it is the fact that almost half of all of the band members are Trinity faculty that makes this story appealing.

Made up of eight members, the band includes three faculty members: Lyn Belisle, instructor of computer science, Bill Kurtin, professor of chemistry, and John Burke, professor emeritus.

"The band for me has just been a very enjoyable outlet," Kurtin said. "It's something that is so totally different from what I have done regularly in terms of teaching and research."

Through the years, the Medina Mudd Band has also enlisted the services of other Trinity faculty. For example, David Rinear, professor of drama, once played the mandolin, and Bates Hoffer, professor of English, once played piano for the band.

"I was in the band about 20 years ago, in the late '80s," Hoffer said. "I was in it for only two years, and they asked me to come in because I could play some country-western songs. But I didn't feel like I was a good enough musician to play with them because everyone there was a real musician. It's an excellent band, and I had a lot of fun."

According to Belisle, the band is celebrating its official silver anniversary this year, but she and Kurtin have been playing together for 30 years. Though many years have passed and members have come and gone, the band keeps playing.

"We used to be a lot more active than we are right now," Belisle said. "We used to play at A Night in Old San Antonio during Fiesta. For a number of years, we played there in La Villita, but we don't do that much any more because it is so much work."

Most of the members are teachers, professors or people with corporate day-jobs who thoroughly enjoy the camaraderie that the band provides.

According to Belisle, right now, it is just an on-the-side activity.

"When you have eight people together with different schedules, it gets difficult," Belisle said. "We still rehearse every Monday night, and we don't take as many gigs as we used to."

One of the Medina Mudd Band's favorite gigs is its annual fund-raiser for Inner City Development. They hold the event in Quihi Dance Hall and donate all the proceeds to Inter City every January.

Otherwise, the band enjoys playing for other local events.

It performed at Alumni Weekend this past fall, and, according to Kurtin, it has a gig for the Coastal Conservation group tomorrow at the Boerne Community Center.

According to Hoffer, one of his favorite Medina Mudd Band moments was when they performed at an International Conference held at Trinity in 1993.

The country-western dance instructor taught country-western dances to the people of the conference while the band played.

"It's a lot of fun," Belisle said about being a part of the band. "It gets us out of our routine and gets us to do something creative. I think we would all be really sad if we stopped because we have a history."

The only thing missing from the band, however, is a student following. According to Belisle, not many students know about the band, and it is intimidating to know that they might find out.

"I'm worried for them to find out, because I have a lot of musical students in my computer science class," Belisle said. "But they are always welcome to come - they really are. If any of my students want to see me make a fool of myself, that's fine. No, I'm just kidding. They are always welcome because music is about sharing."

According to Kurtin, he has seen few students come to the band's performances, even though their gigs are mostly advertised within the faculty.

"I've seen students who have come to the shows from time to time, and they have always been surprised to see me up there doing this," Kurtin said. "It's like: 'Chemistry professors don't do this - it's so out of character.' So I have always enjoyed that aspect of it. It's nice to see students realize that University faculty members do have these personas, and I encourage them to explore their other side-interests like we have. It makes for a much fuller life."