

Reunited and it feels so good

More and more New Yorkers are reconnecting with long-lost friends

BY ABBY LUBY

In “Reign Over Me,” in theaters this Friday, Adam Sandler’s Charlie Fineman finds solace in a long-lost relationship with his college roommate, played by Don Cheadle.

It’s a scenario that plays out in real life, too, and sometimes just as dramatically.

Denise Resnik thought she’d never see her high school sweetheart again.

They were buddies in junior high in the Bronx and went steady while attending Bronx High School of Science. They promised they would never part.

But they did. They went to different colleges and dated other people. She married, and so did he.

Resnik is still amazed that she bumped into her high school honey years later, and even more amazed at what happened after that.

The 57-year-old Yonkers pharmacologist said things didn’t work out with the guy she married after college, and divorced him three years later.

Then Resnik ran into Paul, her high school sweetie, at a synagogue they attended as children.

“Seeing him was like *déjà vu*,” she said. “It felt like we were young children again. But he looked terrible. He told me he was going through a divorce.”

Resnik offered him a shoulder to cry on. “He seemed so unhappy and needed somebody to talk to. It felt like old friends.” But their romance rekindled quickly, and old friends became new lovers.

“We had been there and knew the history,” said Resnik. Six months later, the two were married, and within a few years had two sons.

Serendipitous reunions with old friends or lovers are rare. Leaving little to chance, more and more people are driven to find childhood buddies, old roommates and former teachers on the Internet.

Mark Goldston, chairman and CEO of United Online Inc., the owner of Classmates.com (you’ve seen the banners of ’70s-era yearbook photos pop across your computer screen countless times), said statistics show that three out of four people reminisce about their old flame. The site reunited two high school sweethearts who sadly parted 25 years ago over an unwanted pregnancy.

“They ended up having the child,” said Goldston. “They separated, put the child up for adoption and lost touch for about 25 years. They reconnected through Classmates.com, got married and found their biological child.”

Reunion sites help connect people and organize high school, family and military reunions. In the U.S., there are more than 100,000 high school reunions yearly with more than 8 million attendees, Goldston said. “These sites really do have heart. When you’re about 10 years out of high school, the nostalgia kicks in. You think about the positive things and forget about who aimed spitballs at you or gummed up your locker.”

New Yorker Felicity Arengo, a biologist at the American Museum of Natural History, went online to find three women friends from her high school in Buenos Aires.

Surprisingly, one of them lived just a few blocks from the Manhattan museum, while the other two are still in Buenos Aires. “Although the four of us haven’t gotten together since 1984, we’ve met with one or two,” said Aren-



The Rhythm Aces post-reunion, from left to right: Herb Glazer, Vinnie Fiore, Lou Fiallo, Steve Freeman and John D’Amaro. Below, the a cappella group at the New York club the Latin Quarter in 1960.



go, describing the new connection as a “gossipy E-quarter” and a cyber version of “Sex and the City.”

“We E-mail every day,” she laughed. “It’s like an online ‘true confessions’ about who had plastic surgery, silicone breast implants and other steamier things.”

The four have re-bonded effortlessly despite having very different careers and lifestyles (corporate executive, artist, teacher and biologist, respectively).

“We were able to slide into a comfort zone,” said Arengo. “We all knew each other at the worst time in our lives — when we were pimply, geeky teenagers. When you’ve known people at their worst, it’s easy to connect later on.”

For five guys who sang doo-wop in the 1960s at their high school dances in Queens, reuniting 35 years later changed their lives.

“We were just kids — teens — and sang a cappella on street corners, at clubs and socials,” said Steve Freeman, 66, who was part of a music group called Five Checkers. After high school, they became the Rhythm Aces and recorded professionally for about seven years.

“But then we separated,” he said. “Each went his own

way and we lost touch.” One singer, Herbie G., moved to Canada and wasn’t heard from for 30 years.

“Then I got an E-mail with an old picture of the group having drinks at the Copacabana. I said ‘Oh, my, it’s Herbie!’ We connected with him but he couldn’t remember who we were.”

Herbie had suffered a brain injury after a bad accident and suffered a complete loss of memory, said Freeman. “He found us under Jamaica High School at Classmates.com. We all called him and cried over the phone. It was quite emotional.”

The group decided to meet in Lake George, halfway between New York City and Canada.

“We did a lot of crying and a lot more laughing, but he still didn’t know us,” said Freeman. “Finally, we decided to sing a few of the old songs. Amazingly, Herbie remembered all the songs — he didn’t remember us, but he remembered the songs.”

They were encouraged to sing in the hotel’s cocktail lounge then and there. “We got up on stage and sang three songs,” said Freeman. “It was just like it was 30 years ago.” ♦

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