

Hello and goodbye lead connections with classmates

By Jef Benedetti

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I recently attended a milestone high school reunion that was literally a long time in the making. Originally scheduled to take place last year – the year that no longer exists – the event in Las Vegas was a smash hit.

Out of our original complement of 167, almost 20 percent of my fellow grads have gone to that big senior ditch day in the sky. Still, the organizers hoped for a bigger turnout than we had: about 35, plus a few spouses.

I was enlisted, beginning in 2019, to find the lost souls, those who couldn't be found, and a few who didn't want to be found.

It turns out, after working 30 plus years as a reporter, I knew a little something about finding people, even some who didn't want to be found.

From the “they actually talked to me” file, eight people, mostly men, said they just weren't interested in renewing days gone by.

Only one person hung up on me, a woman. She didn't like me back in the day, either.

Three, without saying exactly why, said they hadn't been to a reunion yet and saw no reason to go now. One of them, a guy I know very well, was so damn polite about it, I didn't press the issue.

The rest?

“You're still alive? I thought you'd be one of the first to go!”

“The only guy I liked in our class is dead. I'll just visit his grave, next time I'm in town.”

“I don't travel so well anymore. I didn't go outside all last year. I mean, I went outside, but only in my own back yard.”

“Geez, what does anyone have to say that we didn't already say 51 damn years ago?”

“I went to the 10-year reunion. We looked the same. That's how I want to remember everybody.”

“I wonder if that girl I had a crush on senior year will be there ...” She was,

“It's funny how much friendlier people get as they get older. I didn't used to like you, but now, I'm glad you called. Goodbye.”

“I heard the guy who owns a winery isn't going to be there, with his great wine, so I guess I'll have to order some online.”

“I was happy, back then. Life is a crapfest now, and I'm still celebrating.”

“Will you please not call me again!”

“I have parakeets, and the telephone ringing drives them crazy. Shut up, you bloody birds!”

“Who? From where? Russell? Is that you? I was asleep.”

“Your buddy in band still owes me five bucks.”

“My mom asked me the other day if I was going to go to the reunion. I told her no, the people weren’t very nice to me in high school, so I pass.”

At least one’s perspective was more focused on the present than the past.

“How many dispensaries are on Fremont Street now?”

2022 – Have a great new tradition! Benedetti