

Online gamble paid off in love

Chance website meeting united Wilmington couple who were classmates decades ago

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WILMINGTON -- This'll be the story they'll be able to tell their future grandchildren someday.

Before they met, fell in love and tied the knot, Brian Robinson and Vicki Jordan -- who both live in the same neighborhood in Wilmington just a half-mile away from each other -- were two hardened skeptics when it came to finding love online.

Forget about [Match.com](#), eHarmony and all that, they told all their friends. Robinson had been there and done that already, with little success -- and Jordan just spurned the idea, despite the fact her friends would prod her at times to get out of the house and meet a mate.

One day, he was playing poker online at a social gaming website called Winster, and she joined his chat room to play at the same virtual poker table as a team.

And when he saw her screen name was "Vicki," and she was from Wilmington, it made Robinson perk up and take notice.

"I thought, 'Wow, another person from Wilmington, Mass. That's incredible,' " Robinson said. "I thought, uh oh." And almost right away, within five minutes, I started saying 'hi' to her. I told her, 'Hi, Vicki. I'm from Wilmington, Mass., too.' "

And then, after chatting back and forth a bit online, they realized they had both attended Boutwell Elementary School and West Intermediate School in Wilmington. And they realized they both had a slew of friends in common. And here was the kicker: They still lived within streets of each other, near their old elementary school.

"I couldn't believe it," Jordan said. "I thought, 'Oh my God, he was a stalker.' "

She even remembered turning to her dog and saying: "Nikita, you have to protect me."

But little by little, Robinson started to wheedle his way into her heart.

Because she was having problems using the website, Robinson made his move, quite deftly, offering to help her with any computer problems. A tad bit wary, though, of just whom she was dealing with, Jordan relented at giving him her phone number, at first, but said she'd rather take his instead.



Vicki Jordan and Brian Robinson visit Boutwell Elementary School in Wilmington, where they were fourth-grade classmates decades ago. A chance online meeting brought them together. SUN / TORY GERMANN

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And so she called. And during that conversation, they both learned that they'd actually met before -- when he first came to Boutwell in the fourth grade after having moved from Somerville.

"She was definitely the first girl I remember meeting," Robinson said, "and I sat next to her and she gave me this big beautiful smile and I never forgot that."

Jordan's memories of him are a bit hazier. "But I do remember always being extra nice to the new kids in town because I always felt kind of sorry for them," she said.

And she recalled knowing of him in middle school -- how he'd hang out with his crowd of punk-rock fans behind the Dunkin' Donuts in town, where she flocked to with her friends, too, though they never really chatted back then. Robinson said she was one of those girls he'd admired from afar, never summoning up the gumption to ask her out.

When Robinson asked her out for a date during that first call, she just burst out laughing. But then a couple days later e-mailed him to say yes.

And she gave him a chance, but on one condition: "I told him, if my dog likes you, it's OK. Because dogs know. They know a creep from a noncreep."

And as it turned out, Nikita ended up liking him so much it's hard to remember now who owned the dog first, Jordan said. "And he did steal my dog from me," she joked.

That was about a year ago, and the couple is now engaged and plan to marry on Sept. 10, 2011.

Neither of them are huge online gaming addicts either, they say. They just happened to dabble a little bit into gaming on Winster, hearing about the website from friends. But say what you will about coincidence, pure chance, the world is rife of ironies, Robinson says. "It was meant to be."

They are big-time fans of Winster now, and sometimes even play games on it together, Robinson said.

"We sit right next to each other now, and we actually play these games together almost every single night," he said. "It's a lot easier when you actually are in the same room."

And both marvel at the ironies of their love match, finding each other in a vast virtual-gaming world, only to find they were living just streets away from each other.

"Before I met Brian, I raised my two children alone, and I hadn't been on a date for 24 years," Jordan said. "I figured it would be me and my dog for years after."

"My boys are grown now, and friends would try to convince me to do online dating, telling me, 'What do you think, a man's gonna' just fall into your lap?'"

"But now I just tell them, 'He fell into my laptop instead,'" she laughed.

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