



Bride-to-be says, ‘Yes’, 70 years after first proposal

Nearly 70 years ago John Pearman, now aged 91, popped the question to Judy Arndt, 88, and this year she finally said yes. They will be married this Saturday, 4 November, at St Michael’s Mitcham, the parish that brought them together all those years ago.

Their roots at the church run deep. John’s father Reginald was the rector of the church for 23 years from 1939 until he retired in 1962, and Judy’s father Fred Harman was the organist for much of that time.

‘Judy joined the choir when she was nine and I was 11,’ says John. ‘We were both sopranos but we weren’t romantically attached in those days.’

Nevertheless the families were close. Judy’s brother Lewis was John’s best friend throughout his teenage years and Judy and John used to mix socially.

‘Sometimes we went out as a little group of young people,’ says Judy.



John Pearman and Judy Arndt are preparing for their wedding day on Saturday.

But feelings clearly blossomed between the pair and when John was 20 and Judy 18, John proposed.

“It must’ve been pretty halfhearted on my part,” says John, “because Judy turned me down. She felt she was too young at that stage.”

The pair drifted apart, with John beginning a teaching career and moving to Port Augusta. He married Zelda Day and taught at five schools for the next 34 years.

Judy stayed in Adelaide and married Max Arndt. The couples still bumped into each other occasionally, especially as John maintained his friendship with Judy’s brother Lewis.

“He and I used to make a point of having lunch a couple times a year and Judy came to one or two of those lunches, with Max and Zelda there as well,” says John.

Judy and Max were together for 65 years before his death in 2021 while Zelda died soon after. She and John had been married for 66 years.

John and Judy started to see more of each other as they offered each other solace. Judy would visit John at his nursing home and he started to visit Judy at her retirement village in the inner eastern suburbs. At first their meetings were fortnightly, then weekly, then three times a week.

“John, you know we are falling in love,” Judy finally said.

“Yes, it does seem so,” John replied. “Does that mean we have to get married?”

For a while it looked like Judy would turn him down again.

“Don’t be silly,” she said. “You’re 91 and I’m 88. You don’t get married when you’re that old.”

But by March this year she had changed her mind and John marked the occasion in his diary with three words: “She said, “Yes.”

“Maybe I’ll change my mind again after another 66 years,” Judy says.

John’s current parish is St Matthew’s, Kensington. The wedding on Saturday afternoon will be conducted by Mitchum parish priest Fr David Covington-Groth with a homily from Bishop Tim Harris, with people from both parishes attending. The reception will be in the church hall following with a cake baked and decorated by Judy herself.

“I made my own wedding dress, too,” she says.

She only has one regret. Her older brother Lewis will not be there to see her make her vows. He passed away two years ago. “Lew would’ve loved the present carryings on, he would’ve thought it was great fun,” Judy says.

Instead, her younger brother Raymond will escort her down the aisle.

“I was seven when Raymond was born and he was always my dear little brother.”

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