

# She snared her 'Elvis'

After a stressful start, the Deokis are renewing their wedding vows.

It was love at first sight for Vineeta Deoki when she cast eyes on her future husband, Norman.



Picture: Tony Gough N16MV100

## **Vineeta and Norman Deoki are among couples to be renewing their marriage vows at St John's Uniting Church in Essendon.**

Vineeta was a company secretary in their homeland, Fiji, and Norman was a clerk in the same firm. She said she thought he looked like Elvis Presley and they started going out. They explained that, in their day, unmarried young people of Indian backgrounds were not supposed to go out unchaperoned and that, if a person wanted to marry someone, it was the parents' job to start negotiations.

Vineeta said she and Norman often went to the seaside when courting but could not go to a public place such as a restaurant in case someone saw them and told their families. The Deokis married on December 16, 1943, in their home city of Suva – but not without a great deal of anxiety for Vineeta, then 19. "I was very frightened because I had a few threatening phone calls from his ex-girlfriend, saying things like 'who is going to be the bride on Saturday?'," Mrs Deoki said.

"She was swearing. I hung up and cried and when I was going to the church (service) I cried. And when the priest said 'is there anyone who has an objection?' I looked up the back but she didn't come in."

Mr Deoki said: "After we got engaged, I told all the girlfriends . . . about five. Only one was giving a problem." "He looked like Elvis, so all these girls were after him," Mrs Deoki said and laughed.

They migrated to Melbourne in 1974 to give their two children a better life, initially living in Ascot Vale before moving to East Keilor and, three months ago, to Hillside. They have three children – son Sanjesh and daughters Aradhana and Angela – and four grandchildren. Mr Deoki said Vineeta was a wonderful wife and she was equally complimentary of him.

"He makes me a cup of tea in bed, that is very nice, and he helps me a lot in the house," said Mrs Deoki. Mr Deoki: "Every Sunday we have a family day, so we enjoy seeing our grandchildren."

Mrs Deoki said they had hoped to renew their wedding vows on their 40th anniversary while travelling in America, but got sick and could not do it. "We wanted to . . . in Las Vegas, with Elvis Presley," she said.

This Sunday, the Deokis will finally renew their love at their Essendon church's renewal of vows service for them and other couples.

And while their minister, the Rev Mark Dunn, will not be dressed up as Elvis, Mrs Deoki can go one better – her Elvis-look-a-like husband.

## Couples unite for love in church

You can have your cake and eat it too at St John's Uniting Church – so long as you're prepared to share it with other couples. The Essendon church is holding a renewal of vows service on Sunday, October 17, for six married couples who want to publicly restate their love. Minister the Rev Mark Dunn said he planned the 10am service to "encourage a positive approach to marriage and sustain these relationships where we possibly can". The church, on the corner of Buckley St and Mt Alexander Rd, will also lay on a large cake for the renewal couples to cut. To take part in the service, contact St John's on 9370 9263 or email [office@stjohnsessendon.org.au](mailto:office@stjohnsessendon.org.au)