

# 'We've remarried – we love each other more than ever'

As Edna, 76, and Simon, 38, renew their wedding vows, it's clear they're still crackers about each other...

**W**HEN EDNA AND Simon Martin got married six years ago, few people imagined it would be "happily ever after" – not least because of the whopping 38-year age gap between them.

Indeed their marriage, in 2005, caused a national uproar. Simon was 32 and a virgin when they met. Edna was 70, divorced and old enough to be his grandmother. He was labelled a simpleton, while she was derided as a predatory old lady. But six years on, the couple are more in love than ever – and they've even renewed their wedding vows.

"When we got together, Simon said that if he could have just one year with me, it would be worth it," says Edna. "Now we've done six, and before I go galloping off into senility, we wanted to celebrate!"

"We've both been through a rocky patch with our health recently and have come through



**2005**

Their first wedding day six years ago

it stronger. We wanted a festive ceremony because we both love Christmas and it was at Christmas time seven years ago that we realised we wanted to be a couple and spent our first night together."

The couple invited *Closer* to join them for the 15-minute ceremony at their home in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, which was held in the "auditorium" they built in their garden to house the Compton organ they have lovingly restored.

It's clear they're still madly in love as they recite their vows in unison, saying: "Remembering the years we've spent together, we promise to keep them safe in our hearts and will continue to cherish and care for each other into the future."

Edna – dressed in the purple dress she wore at their first wedding – wipes a tear from her cheek and kisses Simon tenderly on the nose. Then he hops on to their beloved organ and plays a rousing rendition of



**2011**

The happy couple tied the knot again

Abba's *Mamma Mia*. There is no dancing, but plenty of foot tapping.

The only guests are two of their closest friends, Sandy Bristow, who's coy about her age, but will admit to being in her 60s, and Arthur Andrews, 76.

"Our relationship is deeper now," says Edna. "We're stronger together. And there's still a wild physical attraction between us," she giggles.

Simon adds: "Before I met Edna I was withdrawn and had no friends. She's taught me what life is all about and I'm rampant for her."

As they cut the chocolate cake in the kitchen and toast the day

with a glass of whisky, they look back over their time together.

Both organ fanatics, they met in 2003 through the West of England Theatre Organ Society. Edna, a retired engineer, was divorced from her husband of 37 years, who's the father of her four children.

She'd since had a relationship with a milkman 15 years her junior, but he'd died five years earlier. "I was expecting to be alone for the rest of my life," she says.

Simon was living with his mum and dad, who was also a retired engineer, in

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On their honeymoon in Cornwall in 2005



Edna and Simon renewed their vows in their organ "auditorium" at home



The pair bonded over their love of organs

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# 'We wake up holding hands. Marriage is magical'

Birmingham. Suffering from epilepsy and dyspraxia, a disorder that makes sufferers clumsy, had diminished his confidence and he was equally despairing of meeting his soulmate. "I had no idea how to find a girlfriend," he says.

It was his vulnerability that first attracted Edna. "He weighed 14st and was dressed in black," she recalls. "He looked like a dreadful blob, but I found him dishy and wanted to love him all over."

Yet for 18 months she hid her feelings for him.

"We'd bump into each other at organ bashes around the country. He kept intimating that he wanted more than friendship, but I thought it would be healthier for him to be with someone his own age," she says.

But Simon continued to woo her with five-hour phone calls and romantic renditions of *Goodnight Sweetheart* on the organ. By Christmas 2004, Edna realised she couldn't fight her love for him.

"We were miserable without each other. He called at 2am

on Christmas morning when I was staying with friends," she recalls. "The only place I could get reception was on their roof. So I was talking to Simon in my jim-jams, blue with cold. I said he'd better come and stay. Two days later he got on the train to see me and that was that."

He proposed the following Valentine's Day. Edna recalls: "We were in bed at 2am and he didn't have a stitch on. He rolled out on to one knee, and asked me to marry him."

Edna helped her husband-to-be lose 4st then bought him new clothes. They married that July at Weston-super-Mare register office and honeymooned in a caravan in Cornwall.

Tragically, one of Edna's daughters died at 13 from a genetic disorder called Wilson's disease and she is no longer in touch with one of her sons. But her surviving daughter, Lorraine, 53, and other son, Russell, 49, were fully supportive of their marriage.

Simon's parents – who are both younger than Edna – also gave their blessing.

The couple affectionately call each other "Piglet" and "Piglette." Edna explains: "We're a couple of little piggies in a sty." They finish each other's sentences and still can't keep their hands off each other.

Any suggestions that Edna is more of a mother than a lover to Simon are met with disbelief. "If I was his mother, I'd be arrested!" she chuckles.

Asked if they still make love every day, the couple smile at each other and nod. "Age doesn't stop you requiring sex," says

Simon. "Everyone has needs."

But their marriage hasn't been without complications. Simon has a kidney disease and Edna suffers from a bad back. "We've supported each other," she says.

Edna does all the cooking – she'll prepare a turkey for Christmas lunch and her special pineapple pickle for Boxing Day tea. She whispers what she's bought Simon for Christmas – satin underpants, some computer software and a Terry's Chocolate Orange. Simon will only reveal he's buying Edna mint humbugs and some pink carnations as little presents, but is keeping her main gift under wraps.

More than anything, the couple feel extremely lucky.

Edna says: "Every night I go to sleep lying on Simon's shoulder and we wake up holding hands. We're madly in love. Being married to Simon is magical." ■

By Antonia Hoyle



Cutting the cake in their kitchen

PHOTOS: SWANS.COM