



Clockwise from top left Yaakov and Mariya Shapirshteyn; Gino and Angie Terranova; Fred and Frances Futterman; Eric and Elisabeth MacKay; Moses and Tessie Rubenstein

# Enduring love

Photographed for a poignant new book, the couples here are still full of tenderness for one another after more than 50 years. *Kate Salter* picks up their stories

Photographs by **Lauren Fleishman**

For the past six years Lauren Fleishman has been capturing the moments between couples that tell the story of a lifetime spent together. Fleishman, an American photographer living in Paris, began the project when her grandfather died. “I found a book next to his bed that had love letters in it,” she says. “They were love letters he had written to my grandmother during World War Two.” Fleishman says the letters revealed a side of her grandfather that was new to her: as a young man with his whole life ahead of him. “The letters spoke of a young love,” she says, “the type that was filled with the expectations and the joy of the life they were about to embark on together.”

Fleishman decided to photograph and interview couples who had been married

for longer than 50 years. She began by going to “senior” dances in Brooklyn, where she lived, and would seek couples who looked like her own grandparents. “At the time I realised I was no longer a granddaughter – my grandfather had been my last living grandparent – and I definitely felt a sense of loss.” Fleishman found that as well as providing rich material for her book, *The Lovers*, spending time with these people who told her their stories and baked her cakes gave her some sort of comfort at a time when she was grieving.

The point of the project, Fleishman says, was to portray these men and women as they see themselves: not as “old people”, but as people who are still in love after 50, 60 years. “I wasn’t looking at them in terms of their age,”

she says. “I was looking at them in terms of their love. They’re not really photographs of old people. They’re photographs of people in love.”

It’s certainly true that we don’t often see images of people in their seventies and eighties in which their age or infirmity isn’t the focus (adverts for walk-in baths, dentures and comfy shoes...). But in Fleishman’s photographs you can see past the wrinkles, the Zimmer frames and the chintzy interiors – what you get is a portrait of enduring love.

Before photographing the couples, Fleishman would interview them at home, with the couples describing the first time they met, their first date, their wedding day (these interviews are printed in the book). They are stories of a more innocent time. Fred and Frances