

WEY CAN BE GLAM!

shine through? Meet the women who never say dye



YSMAEN FARISH, 37, is a graphic designer, married to Edward, 40, who works in software. The couple live in Berkshire. Ysmaen says:

I USED to have jet-black hair but got my first grey strand when I was 14. My hairdresser said by the time I was 30 I'd be white, and I burst into tears. No teenager wants to hear that they'll have white hair — but it turns out he was right.

I didn't start dyeing it until I was 18 and had a few streaks. I was very adventurous — trying aubergine, navy, red and platinum. I think it was my way of saying: 'No way am I going grey and boring!'

But by the time I reached 30, I was finding it more difficult to track down colours that suited me. The grey regrowth appeared every few weeks, so one day I shaved my head, leaving only half an inch of grey hair. When my husband saw it, he said: 'What on earth have you done?'

I had to admit it looked quite severe — but I knew it would grow back. I made the decision never to colour it again; it was too time-consuming.

Since then, it's been pure white and I think it's rather striking against my olive skin tone. My husband agrees.

Perhaps because I'm a graphic designer and look at things in a slightly unconventional way, I feel having white hair suits my personality. It's kicking back against the social pressure on women to conform.

The looks I get on the street vary massively. Some people say: 'You've got granny hair.' Shopkeepers tend to be quite deferential, calling me 'madam'.

Then there are the young kids who come up and say: 'That's cool, how did you do it? We want hair like that.'

White hair is more wiry and tends to dry out easily, so I have to condition it well.

I also use a special shampoo for silver hair because the tap water where I live can turn my hair yellow.



**WENT GREY AT 18
DITCHED THE DYE AT 30**



MARTINE MERCY, 58, is a homeopath and ambassador for Amoene mastectomy lingerie. She is married to Edward, 68, a financial adviser, and they live in Highcliffe, near Bournemouth, Dorset. She says:

TEN years ago my dark hair suddenly turned white after I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I'm convinced it was the shock of the diagnosis rather than my treatment that did it, because I didn't have chemo or radiotherapy.

After I'd had a mastectomy, my confidence hit rock-bottom and the grey hair really didn't help.

I didn't feel like seeing any of my homeopathy patients and wanted to hide away from the world.

I never considered dyeing it, though — I couldn't bear the thought of having to visit the hairdresser every six weeks to have my roots done.

But six months after the operation, I visited Lourdes, and there I saw a lady who had her long white hair tied back in a plait.

I thought she looked stunning and I realised that I was never going to do anything to disguise my own grey. I was just going to be me and leave my hair alone.

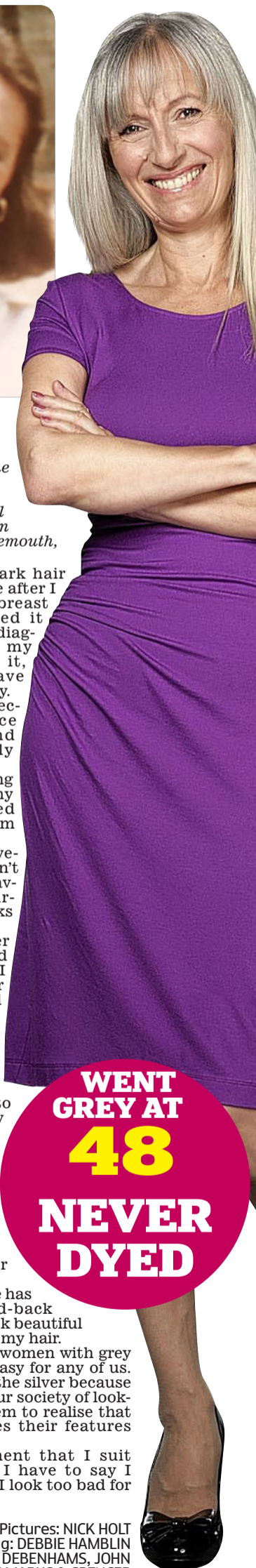
After that, I started feeling more confident. I even had a photoshoot done with my very glamorous sister, and when the shots came back, I realised that I looked rather glamorous myself.

As for my husband, he has always been very laid-back and says he thinks I look beautiful whatever the colour of my hair.

When I look at other women with grey hair, I realise it's not easy for any of us. So many of them hide the silver because there's such a fear in our society of looking old. They don't seem to realise that the fake colour makes their features appear harder.

People often comment that I suit my silver locks, and I have to say I agree. I don't feel that I look too bad for my 58 years.

Pictures: NICK HOLT
Styling: DEBBIE HAMBLIN
Clothes: FENWICK, NEXT, DEBENHAMS, JOHN LEWIS, HOBBS and MARKS & SPENCER



**WENT GREY AT 48
NEVER DYED**



SUSAN WALKER, 58, is a fashion stylist for SuSu and a part-time model. She is married to Redfern, 56, a consultant engineer, has two sons and lives in Hitchin, Herts. Susan says:

UNTIL five years ago, I used to dye my hair a dark ash colour. I'd started noticing flecks of grey appear in my early 30s and so had used a semi-permanent tint from then on.

It wasn't until I reached my mid-40s that the silver started showing through more and more and my hairdresser suggested a more permanent dye. It made my hair look flat rather than highlighted and the children hated it. They said it looked either purple or ginger — not the look I was going for.

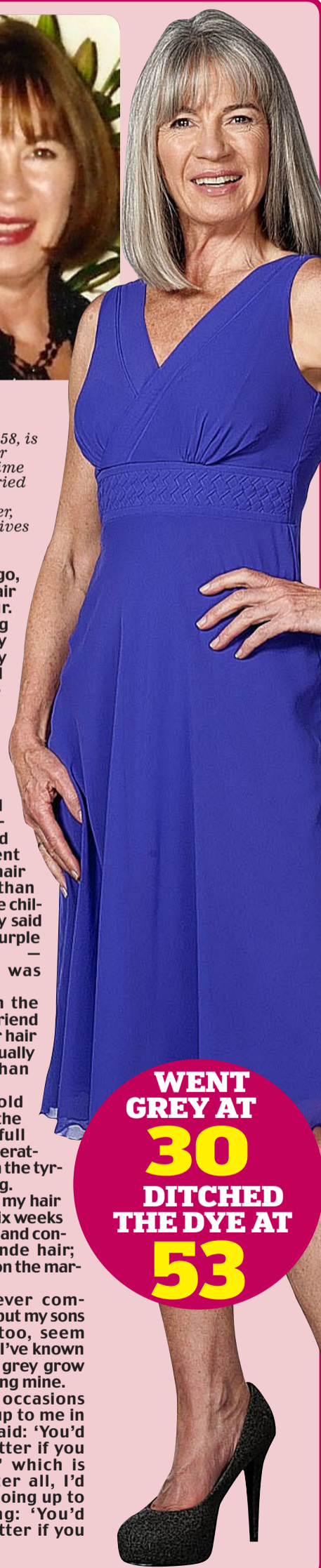
I decided to bin the tint when I saw a friend who'd allowed her hair to go grey. She actually looked better than she had before.

It felt like a bold step to embrace the ageing process full on, but it was so liberating to be free from the tyranny of hair-dyeing.

I make sure I get my hair cut every four to six weeks and use shampoos and conditioners for blonde hair; there's very little on the market for silver hair.

My husband never comments on my hair, but my sons like it. Friends, too, seem inspired by it, and I've known a couple let their grey grow through after seeing mine.

On a couple of occasions men have come up to me in the street and said: 'You'd look so much better if you dyed your hair,' which is rather rude. After all, I'd never dream of going up to them and saying: 'You'd look so much better if you lost 6st!'



**WENT GREY AT 30
DITCHED THE DYE AT 53**