

## This woman paid £10,000 for a new face. She feels it was worth it. Do you?

*At 48, Maureen Ingram had her own successful business as a beauty therapist and a happy 20 year marriage to her photographer husband Neil. Then suddenly, after years of giving beauty advice to clients, Maureen noticed that time was catching up with her. Like many other women, she'd considered cosmetic surgery but only as something to be done at some vague point in the future. Maureen realised that the future was now. She decided not only to have surgery but to travel to New York for it and to spend £10,000 in search of the perfect face. This is her story...*

**A**cceptable. That's my face. Not beautiful, not pretty, not even particularly attractive, if I'm honest with myself. I used to moan when I was rowing up in the sixties that my face just wasn't trendy enough. It wasn't cute or elfin but angular and a little hard-looking. But, like most women, I learned over the years to make the most of what I'd got.

My face was holding up well, I thought, until I hit 43. Then one day I was polishing our glass topped table and suddenly focused on the reflection of my face. It was hanging forward, sagging, it was just horrifying.

From that moment I couldn't get that image out of my mind. I'm a beauty therapist with my own salon in Lincoln. At work, when I leaned over clients, I'd tell them to close their eyes because I couldn't bear them to look at my face.

I'd make myself up and be pleased with my appearance. Then, on the way to work, I caught a glimpse of my lined neck in the wing mirror of my car and the illusion would be destroyed. I looked old, tired and miserable.

I knew then, that the way forward for me was a face-lift. It was going to be the best one, by the most competent surgeon. I didn't care where I had to go or what I had to pay to get it.

When I started looking for someone to do the operation I was very thorough. This was my face, after all, and I wasn't going to trust it to just anyone.

I saw a lot of surgeons in Britain, but no one I felt really happy with. Then a friend recommended Dr. Michael Sachs in New York, one of America's best plastic surgeons. I saw her face and I knew. I'm not saying he'd changed her into something she wasn't before; he'd just turned back the clock - and that's what I wanted.

**A**t my consultation I was terribly

nervous; not at the prospect of surgery, but at the possibility that he might turn me down.

I mentioned the sagginess of my face and he asked me if I was worried about my eyes too. That was a bit of a shock I honestly hadn't noticed because I had been so preoccupied with my cheeks. But the line and puffiness around my eyes were the main cause of my tired look.

Dr. Sachs promised to take 10-15 years off at a stroke and said the aging process would also be delayed. It sounded great. It was silly to expect not to age at all, but for about 10 years it wouldn't be something

I'd have to worry about - apparently that's how long the effects of a face-lift last.

What made up my mind about going to America was the expertise of the surgeons and their attitude towards cosmetic surgery. In England the surgeons have no respect for cosmetic procedures. Dr. Sachs views these operations as sculpture and art combined.

What I wanted to avoid at all costs was the screaming skull appearance My face wasn't going to be crudely stretched, which was what was on offer from many of the other surgeons I'd visited. The facelifts Dr. Sachs had perfected include three parts. The excess fat is suctioned away, the underlying muscles are tightened and finally the skin is gently draped back over.

Like I said, it wasn't going to be cheap. The cost was £10,000, but I'd already



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discussed it with my bank and they agreed to a loan. If they thought it was an odd request they never mentioned it. I flew to New York in a state of high excitement. On the morning of the operation I stared at my old face in my hotel bathroom mirror and thought: "Today's the day I change back."

It took two hours to do the operation and Dr. Sachs promised no pain. I'm not sure whether I believed him but it turned out to be true. When I came round from the anesthetic there was only mild discomfort from the tight bandages. I was out of hospital the next day and hit the shops the day later. This was New York and I was going to have a good time.

When the bandages came off a few days after the operation I was thrilled. There was a bit of swelling but no bruising.

evidence of any surgery at all. We even threw a party. I showed everyone my scars. I love my scars, they're so tiny.

**N**eil says it's the best money we ever spent. Not because he wanted to change me, but because he can understand how happy it's made me feel.

That was six months ago, I went back just the other week for Ultra Pulse Laser Treatment to remove the lines on my face. A face-lift restores tone and removes saggy, floppy skin, but it can't take away the fine lines on the surface.

I was sedated for the treatment, which takes about 20 minutes. The laser vaporizes the top layer of skin and takes away wrinkles with it. It also stimulates the deeper surface of the skin to produce natural collagen, giving a smooth, soft appearance.

Afterwards you look and feel just like you've overdone the sunbathing. To promote healing I wore a dressing of Vaseline.

Since then it's continued to improve as the new skin grows and they say it'll get better and better over the next two months.

You can't put a price on what this has given me. How can you gauge the value of confidence? Some women will think it's a shocking waste of money, but this is how I chose to spend it.

I tell all my clients who are in their 20s to takeout a cheap insurance policy, so when they hit 40 they can cash it in and make the choice - a fantastic holiday, or the face they used to have. It's nice to have a choice.

There are things I can't achieve. I'd like to take off the hard angles on my face ... I'd like a nicer mouth.

Cosmetic surgery could become addictive, after the first operation you tend to think: "Hmmm, I wonder what else I could do." I might give in to a boob job - that's fairly urgent -and liposuction on my back. I've absolutely no regrets. I went through no pain at all. It cost me more than a few pounds, but no pain. In fact the most daunting aspect of it all is knowing that for two hours I lay in front of a man with no make-up on and my mouth wide open.



After Surgery

I'm not afraid of growing old. What I don't want is to look it. I'll be dragged into old age kicking and screaming. I'll fight every step of the way.