

# WHY...



## Dolores Hart Chose a Nun's Life

*One of Hollywood's most promising young stars has quit to enter a convent; her reasons reveal a complex and strong-willed woman*

By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER

HOLLYWOOD was taken by surprise a few months ago when 24-year-old Dolores Hart, one of the screen's most promising actresses, gave up her career to become a Roman Catholic nun.

Dolores is not the first star to forego a promising career for religious reasons. In 1952, June Haver, then one of Hollywood's top actresses, entered a convent at the peak of her professional success. It didn't last. A year later she declared that she could not adjust herself to the strenuous life of a postulant and returned to Hollywood. She did not resume acting, but eventually married Fred MacMurray.

Incidentally, there are a number of similarities between the two women.

Both are converts to Catholicism. Both had just lost a fiancé—June through death when Dr. John Duzik died in 1951. Dolores by choice when she broke off her engagement to van-and-storage executive Don Robinson early this year. But June, who had been married and divorced from trumpet player Jimmy Zito, was thrown into utter despair by her fiancé's death, while the split-up of Dolores and Don seemed to have had no visible effect on her.

Dolores had been considering joining a religious order since 1958. Unknown even to her closest friends, she attended religious retreats at the St. Bernadine Sisters Provincial House in North Stamford, Conn., twice a year. This is the convent that she joined a short time ago.

I remember when I first met Dolores five years ago, just after a friend, Don Barbeau, sent some pictures of her to Paramount.

When Dolores heard about it, she didn't think she would even be considered. "You've been shut away from the world too long," she told Don, who had just returned from a Trappist monastery where he had planned to become a monk. "Girls like me just don't get into motion pictures."

To her surprise, Dolores was called for an interview, signed a long-term contract, and promptly found herself cast opposite Elvis Presley in "Wild Is the Wind."

SHE LOOKED most unlike a budding actress when she drove up to my house in an ancient Chevy convertible that sputtered as it climbed our driveway. She wore a skirt, white blouse, cardigan, and "practical" walking shoes. She was not strikingly beautiful, but pleasantly attractive and down-to-earth in her approach to her career.

"I don't want a lot of money," she insisted, "I don't want to drop names or go to parties simply because important people are there. I just want to prove that I can make it and stand on my own feet."

Five years later I couldn't detect a change in her attitude—only greater maturity and maybe a little more doubt in herself for not having met the right man and married and started to raise a family.

"Maybe I am too old-fashioned," she told me a few months ago when I took her and her grandmother to dinner in London. By then, Dolores had become one of the most-in-demand young actresses in Hollywood. Dolores had starred in more than a dozen films, including "Loving You," "King Creole," "Miss Lonelyhearts," "The Plunderers," "Where the Boys Are," "Lisa," "Come Fly with Me," and "Francis of Assisi,"

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