

in which she played St. Clare, a nun.

We talked a great deal about the sophistication of young women in the 1960s, particularly in show business. Dolores' approach was strict and inflexible. "When I get married, I want to be sure that my love is great enough for me to be willing to give up my career to devote myself entirely to my husband and family."

A few weeks later, she became engaged to 29-year-old Don Robinson. He's exactly the kind of man I expected her to marry, I thought to myself when Dolores introduced us. He was good-looking, conservative, firmly anchored to his religious environment—and far removed from the Hollywood type.

Dolores never took any steps hastily. When she became engaged, she insisted that they would not get married right away. "I promised Don we would be engaged for six months, just to be sure we were doing the right thing," she said later.

When Dolores broke the engagement after a few weeks and then announced that she would become a nun, a lot of people pointed their finger at an unhappy romance. This wasn't the case. Before she entered the convent, she told Hollywood's queen of gossip columnists, Louella Parsons, "I love Don deeply, but that isn't enough. You have to be in love with someone, and he has to come first. When I really faced up to myself—and it took some pretty thorough self-examination—I felt that I wasn't ready to put marriage ahead of my career and to give up my career if necessary."

**E**VEN THOSE CLOSEST to Dolores still seem puzzled by her action and are unwilling to make a prediction. Her mother told me, "What can I possibly know?" There was a tone of bitterness when she continued, "I can't feel a thing for her. I don't really know why you want me to talk about Dolores. It's Dolores' cup of tea. Why not leave her alone?"

However, she did explain that Dolores became a Catholic after "we sent her to parochial school because I think the parochial educational system is better than public school. A lot of people might not appreciate what I'm saying, but I couldn't care less."

There may be some indications in Dolores' early life that forecast her decision of a few months ago. She was born Oct. 20, 1938, in Chicago. Her real name is Hicks. She took the name Hart from a roommate in school whom she admired.

When Dolores was 4, her mother separated from Bert Hicks and moved to Los Angeles. For the next eight years, Dolores was constantly shuttled back and

forth among her mother, father, and grandparents, who remained in Chicago. "I must have traveled 50,000 miles by the time I was 12," she once recalled. "I never really had any roots in a specific place. I felt like a beanbag being punched back and forth. After a while I felt it was better not to be involved. So I spent a lifetime erecting defenses for myself until it became second nature."

As a child, Dolores never enjoyed the luxury of being really dependent on anyone. "Perhaps this is one reason why I had success in show business," she once explained. "The years have equipped me to fend for myself, to be convincing in almost any situation because I couldn't allow myself to be a problem to anybody."

**I**COULDN'T HELP FEELING there was a wall between mother and daughter, although Mrs. Gordon assured me, "Dolores and I always had a wonderful relationship." When her mother moved to Los Angeles, she married Albert Gordon, a successful Jewish restaurateur with whom Dolores got along well. In fact, she seemed closer to him than to her real father, but she was closest of all to her grandmother.

Dolores had her heart set on acting long before she came to Hollywood. Her grandfather was a theater projectionist. She spent a great deal of time with him in the booth. "I had to wake him every 20 minutes to change the reels. He never put on the sound in the booth, so I saw movies only as silents. But I caught the bug anyway. I wanted to be in films since then."

Dolores never quite fit into her environment, and not just outwardly. She wore practically no make-up, her hairdo often resembled something out of "Little Women," her clothes were tailored and well-fitted but hardly chic and sophisticated.

Dolores never had any illusions about herself. "I'm not sexy or mysterious," she once said. "I'm usually on time, and I don't fall in love with my leading man. In short, I don't live in a make-believe world with make-believe people. I prefer to live in a real world with real people."

Dolores was always concerned how her career might affect her life. "It takes a person of tremendous character to withstand the pressures and adulation to which you're exposed. Too often and too easily it becomes self-adulation. I don't want to have despicable characteristics that so many actresses acquire."

If that wasn't her sole reason for wanting to become a nun, it certainly must have had some influence. As for her ability to live through the difficult time ahead of her, I can only go by my own impression that Dolores is a girl who never wavers from her beliefs. If anyone can learn to adjust to the discipline and rigors expected of a postulant and a nun, it is Dolores Hart.

*Almost prophetically, Dolores portrayed a nun in the film, "Francis of Assisi."*

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