

Our Hollywood correspondent had been a great fan of her actress mother, but reports hinted that Romy was quite different; here's what he learned when he interviewed Europe's hottest star **By PEER J. OPPENHEIMER**

I WAS A BOY in Germany when I first saw Romy Schneider's mother, Magda Schneider—then the Doris Day of her country.

When Magda married Wolf Albach-Retty, an Austrian matinee idol, and they were blessed with a beautiful daughter, Romy (a contraction of Rose-Marie), their storybook romance seemed complete.

But life is no fairy tale, and Magda and Wolf split up in 1942, when Romy was four. After her parents' divorce, Romy was reared primarily by her grandparents. She didn't see her parents together again until 20 years later, when Otto Preminger—producer-director of "The Cardinal," in which Romy stars—arranged "a chance meeting" at a Vienna cafe where they were on location.

Like any fan of Magda's, I was curious to see how her offspring turned out. I'd seen Romy in "Boccaccio '70" and "The Trial." I'd heard glowing reports about her performance in the soon-to-be-released "The Victors." But I'd also heard less encouraging reports—such as the angry protestations of Germans who haven't forgiven Romy for leaving her lucrative film career in their country to settle in Paris and Monaco.

Romy was just 19 when she became fed up being an apple-cheeked, pleasantly plump Teutonic Shirley Temple in schmaltzy German movies and fled to Paris. There she costarred in "Christine" with newcomer Alain Delon. The film didn't take, but Alain did, and Romy's new ambition was to be an actress and woman who would fit in with her sophisticated new environment—and her new French boy friend.

For two years Romy all but disappeared from the face of Europe while perfecting her French, studying acting, and transforming herself into a sophisticated, chic Parisienne. Then came the break she'd hoped for—a play opposite Alain in which she portrayed a wicked woman. Romy liked such parts, and producers and her new public were intrigued by the result.

I had heard that Romy's new life had made her temperamental and hard to get along with. But I just couldn't believe that the girl who sprang from the cradle of *Gemütlichkeit* and who was the daughter of an actress I had adored could have turned into a little monster.

My first approach, however, was not reassuring. I had called Romy in Monaco from Los Angeles to set up an appointment. She agreed but was curt and businesslike. At \$4 a minute, I didn't mind. Not yet.

When I reached Monte Carlo two weeks later, I phoned her home to arrange for our get-together. Romy informed me tersely that she was leaving for Paris.

"But I came a long way to see you!" I exclaimed.

"Some days I'm in Monte Carlo, some days in London or Rome or Paris. Tomorrow I'm going to Paris," she snapped. Then she relented a bit and added, "I'll be back the day after tomorrow. If you wish, I'll meet you at the beach club then."

Romy showed up almost on the dot, accompanied by her mother Magda, who had put on a few pounds from the way I remembered her but whose face and laughter retained their vibrance and good humor.

Romy was in blue jeans but quickly changed into a bikini that would have created a riot anywhere but Monte Carlo. Her figure could make Brigitte Bardot blush with envy. Her eyes were blue and sparkling, and her face belied her age and supposed sophistication. Without make-up, the 24-year-old Romy looked an angelic 18.

Romy suggested a swim and then embarrassed me by jumping into the cool Mediterranean ahead of me. She was as lighthearted, gigglish, and full of fun as a teenager on her first date.

But my first interview question—about future career plans—instantly threw her back into her shell. "I don't want to talk about my work! I don't like being interviewed; I'm always being misquoted."

"Okay—no more formal questions," I agreed.

As it turned out, I learned more about Romy this way than if she'd answered 100 carefully worded questions. The moment I became an acquaintance and, after a couple of days, possibly even a friend, she made a complete about-face and became relaxed, cheerful, unrestrained.

Most of Romy's problems stem from the fact that she's at war with herself. Her grandparents and her mother reared her with a protective curtain drawn tightly around her. She was always adored and pampered.

At 15, she had wanted to become a painter, but a chance to appear in a film with her mother quickly changed her plans. And when Romy grew into Germany's biggest box-office attraction, Mama continued to play the protective hen looking out for her chick. Magda chose her scripts, her wardrobe, her friends—until the day Romy rebelled and fled to Paris.

But her new self-appointed role of the sophisticate clashes head-on with her upbringing and background. I doubt that she really objected to the press as much as to the part she herself played, or pretended to play. I don't think she's really angry at anyone—except herself.

POSSIBLY THE MOST OBVIOUS indication of this conflict in Romy is evident in her relationship with her mother. When Romy first started to rebel, Magda had the good sense to step quietly out of the picture rather than interfere when she knew it could do no good. To her, Romy still is the little girl she held in her lap two decades ago. She calls her "Teddy Bear," good-naturedly listens to her whims, and protests mildly when Romy disagrees. But Magda is so fond of Romy that she will not let a disagreement lead to an open break. Apparently this attitude has paid dividends, for Romy continues to feel a need for her mother in times of crisis.

There is still a good deal of Viennese sentimentality in Romy. She suggested we have dinner at a small open-air restaurant on my third night in Monte Carlo. We hardly had finished our first course when the waiter leaned down to whisper something into Romy's ear. She nodded approvingly. A few minutes later, he handed her a crudely wrapped package. Romy thanked him and pulled a handful of francs out of her purse.

"And how much this time?" Magda asked.

"Just 60 francs," Romy told her as she unwrapped a very bad painting of a clown.

"Sixty francs for that?" Magda cried out.

"He needs the money for his mother," Romy explained simply. "She has cancer."

I had a feeling that anyone could come to Romy any time with a problem—true or imagined—and she would try to help out.

As far as I was concerned, Romy lived up to all the expectations I have had since I first heard that my favorite boyhood star gave birth to a beautiful daughter. But then, maybe I, too, am sentimental.



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