

known to her grandchildren as “Bubbi” Strasik, and is known to have raised geese.

Mary grew up in Ford City, and worked in the Westinghouse Brake factory there for a while. As a young woman she dated other men before meeting Felipe Solano in Ford City.

Phil and Mary married in 1919, when Phil was 21 and Mary was 18. They had three children over their first five years of marriage:

Leonora Born in 1920  
Robert Philip Born Sept 15, 1922  
William Earl Born July 24, 1924

As an adult, Phil was a slight man who was very conscious of his Hispanic appearance. Phil was a heavy drinker, but he was also a generous man. One of nieces tells the story of when Uncle Phil actually gave her a whole pack of gum. As no one had ever done that for her before, from that moment on she always thought the world of Uncle Phil. At another point in time, Phil and Mary worked at Thompson’s Restaurant in downtown Pittsburgh. They would smuggle the leftovers out in a tablecloth, and feed the entire neighborhood.



*Mary Shamay Solano in Tustin Street Yard*

Phil died in 1940, at the young age of 43. He was buried in the Catholic cemetery. Mary Shamay Solano would live another 48 years.

If Phil was slight, Mary was absolutely diminutive in stature, standing around 4 and a half feet. Growing up, her grandchildren would use her as a height benchmark well before reaching their teens. But her size downplayed her tenacity. She broke her arm once because she refused to give up her purse to a would-be thief. She did not press charges since she knew the youth. Another time a large man entered her house, and said, “I’m going to kill you old lady”. Mary offered him some tea so they could talk about it first. The man accepted her invitation, and Mary later slipped



*Mary and Alan in the ruins of Mary Shamay Solano's last Tustin Street home*