

## 7. Robert and Arlene Kessler Solano

Robert Philip Solano was born on September 15, 1922 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His parents were Felipe and Mary Shamay Solano. Felipe and Mary, both immigrants to America around the turn of the century, were laborers in the industrial Pittsburgh of the early twentieth century.

Arlene Emma Solano was born on July 10, 1930 in the small town of Mabel, Pennsylvania. Her parents were Elias and Emma Kessler. When Arlene, also known as Emmie, was about five, her father Elias responded to a call to the ministry and moved to Dayton, Virginia for his studies. After the tragic loss of her older brother, Harry, in 1936 the Kessler family moved back to Pennsylvania for Elias to finish his studies for the ministry. Her father was ordained as a United Evangelical Brethren minister in 1938, and they began their lives in the ministry in varied places such as the West Virginia panhandle, the Kentucky appalachin mountains, and various parts of Pennsylvania.

In depression era appalachia things were tight. At times, Arlene's father depended solely on church offerings for sustenance. One week, Elias collected only 5 cents in the offering. Also, the facilities in Kentucky and West Virginia were far from modern. Not only did they not have indoor plumbing; in most of these 1940 era churches they did not even have outhouses.



School Days  
1940-41

Arlene graduated from Bridgewater Highschool (Virginia) in 1947. Arlene was a determined and strong person from an early age. She was also incredibly stoic, regardless of the circumstances. She was especially close to her younger brother Charlie, who was eight years younger than she.



Although Robert grew up in the same depression era, his experience was more urban. Bob grew up with his brother Bill and sister Leonora (Lee) in the tenements of Pittsburgh. Bob began playing trumpet early in his life, and excelled in the instrument and even was able to earn extra money playing for others. However, life growing up in the slums was tumultuous, especially as father Felipe often drank heavily. Bob, a handsome and personable lad, began to hang around with the "wrong" crowd. Among this crowd, such as stolen cars were common. In fact, his cousins later recalled that Bob

*Lee, Bill, and Bob*