



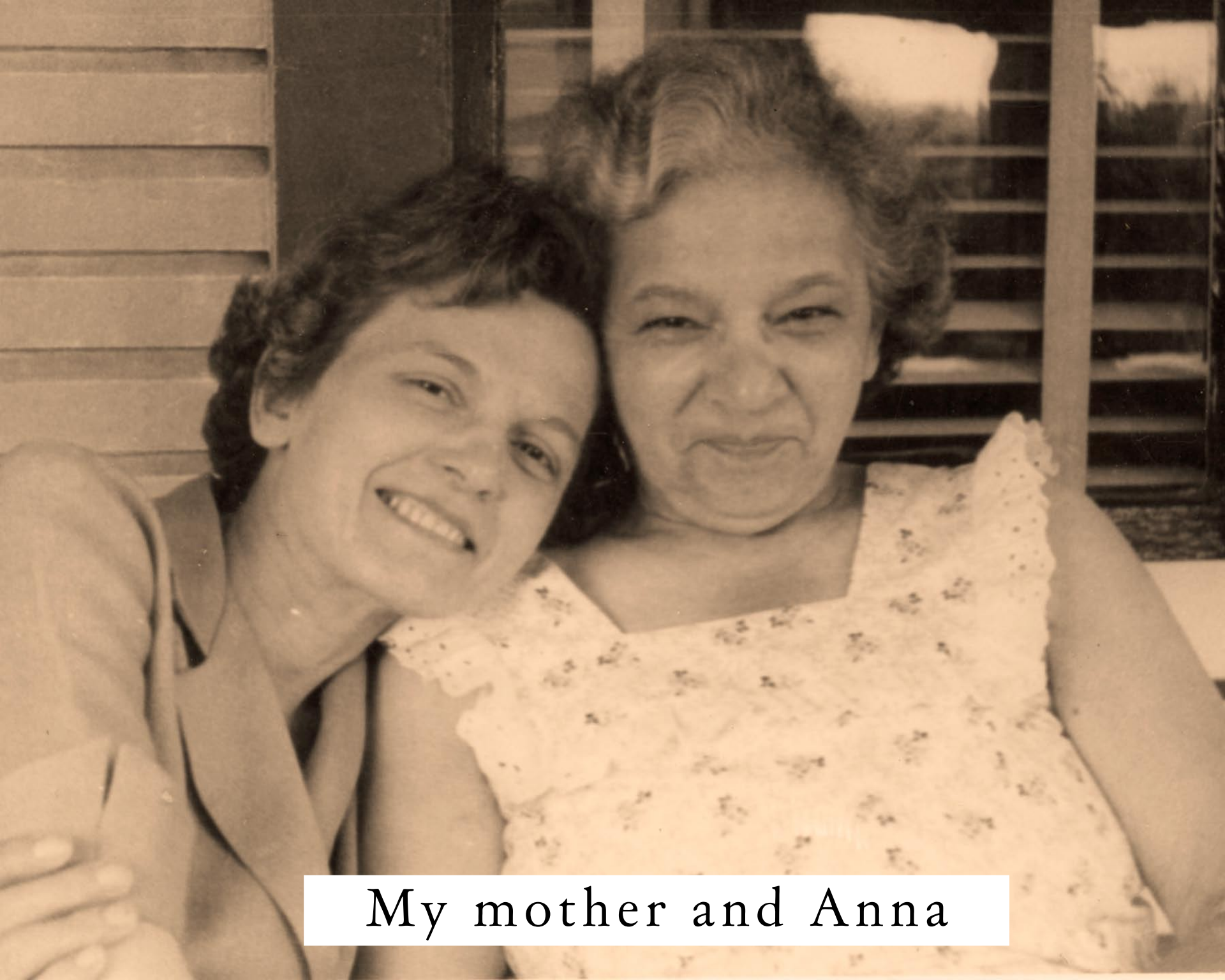
CHOPPING DOWN THE FAMILY TREE

My grandmother Anna Matisfosiky met my grandfather Stefan Matik in Chicago when they were both in their early twenties and recent immigrants from Slovakia.

He was a good looker and she was not. By the time Stefan was thirty he was bald. She famously said, "I married a blondie, and ended up with a baldy."

Stefan was a gambler, but he was a loser. When he played cards with his sons later, they said it was like taking candy from a baby. He loved the Pittsburgh Pirates, and as a boy he would drag me to Forbes Field every Sunday and we sat in the bleachers. The Pirates always lost.

Stefan would also take me for a Sunday stroll, which was a cover for him to play cards with his crony's. He would fill me with cokes. To this day I don't drink cokes.



My mother and Anna

After my grandparents were married they fled to Bellefonte Pennsylvania, because he stabbed a man while playing cards in Chicago. Bellefonte was where she had a cousin, who had a forest that he was logging. Anna cooked for the lumber jacks. That's where my mother was born.

Eventually the lumbering gave out. They moved to McKeesport where they were hiring in the steel mills. That's how we arrived in McKeesport.

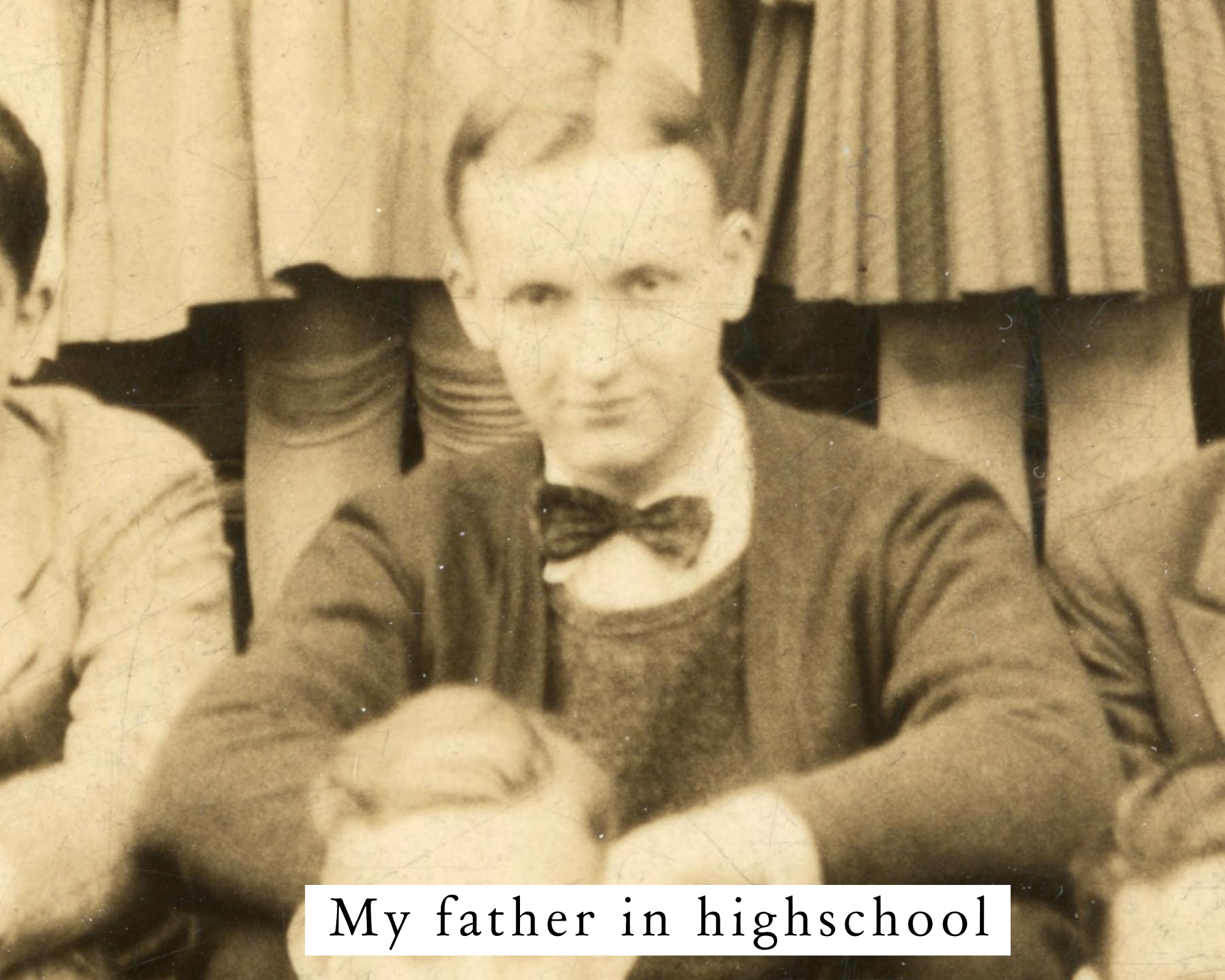
One payday when Stefan came home from work he said to Anna,
“As I exited National Tube there was this poor orphan who cried she had nothing eat and she needed shoes. So I gave her my paycheck.”

She knew the truth. He played cards with some of the sharks in the saloon outside the steel works and lost as usual.



My father's father Valentine Mihal married Catherine in Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania. They came to Duquesne for the same reason, to find work in the steel mills. They had five kids, two sons and three daughters.

My uncle Bill was gay, and died tragically of spinal streptococcal meningitis at twenty-three years old.



My father in highschool

My mother and father had to get married
because my mother was knocked up.
They lived unhappily-ever-after as
good catholics who could not divorce.

I inherited Anna and Stefan's huspa, as
they brought me up until I was five,
when my parents finally shared a flat.

That's how I became Sonny on High Street.
That's how I became Duane Michals.

Who are you?