

Uncle Clarence, my father's much older brother ...
"Son, we'll talk about that when you're older."
"Bubble, that's something you'll have to ask your father."
When I was young, I thought, like Duke, the bulldog,
Clarence passed away right after I was born.
Later, I believed he died much earlier.
Photos show like Nana he was unattractive,
small, had her voice yet did little with it:
no congregation gave him a grandfather's
clock or silver and though he never married,
"every dime he had he spent on women."
"He worked at the Store but he was no business man."

"You must have been four when your Uncle Clarence died."
So he too lived in Nana's big brown house.
I cannot recall once having seen the man,
much less hearing he'd shot himself. Was my father
sitting beside him in the Model A,
trying to wrestle the gun from his brother's hand?
Was it out hunting squirrels my father spied
Clarence's coonskin cap above a low stone wall,
aimed, and fired? I asked another friend
of the family what he knew. "If that's what
happened, Michael, your Dad got away with it.
Michael, your Uncle Clarence deserved to die."

-- Michael Lebeck

Coconut Grove FL

ON AVOIDING BANKRUPTCY

There's no free or
unconditional
love --
one has to pay
for
everything.

The situation
is really:
how much does one
pay in advance --
and how much with
each installment?

-- Sonia Topper Weller

Kiryat Ono, Israel