

pushing toward a higher salary. Much of that can be blamed on sheer envy. As H. L. Mencken, the twentieth-century journalist, satirist, social critic, cynic, and freethinker noted, a man's satisfaction with his salary depends on (are you ready for this?) whether he makes more than his wife's sister's husband. Why the wife's sister's husband? Because (and I have a feeling that Mencken's wife kept him fully informed of her sister's husband's salary) this is a comparison that is salient and readily available.\*

All this extravagance in CEOs' pay has had a damaging effect on society. Instead of causing shame, every new outrage in compensation encourages other CEOs to demand even more. "In the Web World," according to a headline in the *New York Times*, the "Rich Now Envy the Superrich."

In another news story, a physician explained that he had graduated from Harvard with the dream of someday receiving a Nobel Prize for cancer research. This was his goal. This was his dream. But a few years later, he realized that several of his colleagues were making more as medical investment advisers at Wall Street firms than he was making in medicine. He had previously been happy with his income, but hearing of his friends' yachts and vacation homes, he suddenly felt very poor. So he took another route with his career—the route of Wall Street.<sup>3</sup> By the time he arrived at his twentieth class reunion, he was making 10 times what most of his peers were making in medicine. You can almost see him, standing in the middle of the room at the reunion, drink in hand—a large circle of influence with smaller circles gathering around him. He had not won the Nobel Prize, but

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\*Now that you know this fact, and assuming that you are not married, take this into account when you search for a soul mate. Look for someone whose sibling is married to a productivity-challenged individual.