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Monthly Musings

"This place is spectacular! Look at the ornamentation. I read that the Great Hall's ceiling is 50 feet high," my wife exclaimed as we entered Cornelius Vanderbilt II's Newport summer home, The Breakers.

"Look at this library Bob, you love books so much this must be your favorite room."

"How many volumes do you think it holds?" I inquired.

"What?"

"Well my Kindle can hold 3,000 books, so I was just wondering how many this library had?"

My wife, YuenMan, pretended she didn't hear me as we moved to the Music Room. On droned the guide, "This room has a gilt coffered ceiling lined with silver and gold, as well as an elliptical ceiling molding which bears the inscription in French of song, music, harmony and melody. Around the edge are the names of well known composers."

"Imagine what a pair of Wilson MAXX Series 3's would sound like in this room?"

"Those are \$68,000 speakers!"

"Hey, he was rich it wouldn't have been a problem. Too bad they weren't invented yet. Anyway, they didn't have electricity. Of course if they did, that phonograph wouldn't cut it with the Wilson speakers. You'd need at least a PC running iTunes or something."

"Shhhh, we are coming to the kitchen."

"The work table is made of zinc, a forerunner to stainless steel. Ice cut from the ponds kept the side rooms cool for food storage." the guide explained.

"What? They couldn't afford a Kitchenaid?"
"Stop Bob, did you know Vanderbilt inherited \$75 million. That would equal \$70 billion today which would make him the richest man in the world."

"OK, I'll give you that this house is magnificent but I wouldn't trade places with him. No air conditioning, no internet, no washing machine. His garage held smelly horses rather than a Nissan Murano like yours. It would've been a 45 hour carriage ride or 9 hour train ride to NYC and a 5-day train ride to California. And that doesn't even consider antibiotics or stents for heat attacks. Did you know he died of a stroke?"

"I'm going on the next tour alone!"

Things Financial

The above conversation is fictitious but it could've easily been real. Though not at the top of the list of things we are thankful for, it is a blessing for those of us with some means to be able to help others. And, of course, a year-end gift to your favorite charitable cause can reduce your tax bill.

Wishing you all a very Happy Thanksgiving!

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