“What Being Tall Means to Me” Kate Van Appledorn

Growing up I was always scared of being tall because it’s not what I thought was pretty. Now I consider it a blessing because of the countless opportunities it has provided me. I have been able to grow in confidence both as an athlete and outside of sports. My height is something that might make me distinct from others, but I don’t let that make me feel ashamed. Instead, it empowers me to live without fear of what others think of me.

Being tall comes with a few disadvantages: hitting your head on the showerhead, hanging off the edge of beds, and never finding pants that fit, to name a few. It also draws a lot of attention. I am used to older ladies asking me how long my legs are or telling me it will be hard to find a man someday who is taller than I am. I am not the short, dainty girl that society often normalizes. Nevertheless, being tall also grants me opportunities to express who I am and it naturally allows me to be a leader in the communities I am a part of.

Since I am tall, I was introduced to volleyball at a young age. Coaches noticed it was years of hard work, discipline, and focus that got me to the place I am today. I am forever grateful that the body God blessed me with that provided me the opportunity to play the sport I love. Without my height, I may not have been able to fulfill my dream of playing college volleyball.

Another opportunity that being tall gave me was to develop into a leader on my school basketball team. Since I am the tallest person on the court, people naturally look up to me. This comes with a lot of responsibility because if I start to get lazy, the whole team slowly follows in my footsteps, and we don’t play to our potential. One time, we were losing a close game and our coach called a timeout. The huddle was silent, and I noticed that everyone was looking at me. I knew that we understood what we were doing and just had to trust ourselves, so I told our team just that. We ended up coming back and winning not because of the words I said but because of the confidence people felt in their own abilities. People looked up to me because of my height, but my part was to give them a reason to keep following me. This takes intention; I work every day to be a person who leads with compassion, humility, and integrity.

When I stand in a room full of people, I have learned that I can’t hide. I need to fully embrace who I am because nothing about me is going to change. Being a tall person my whole life, I sometimes felt awkward or ashamed of who I was. I had to learn to love the body I was blessed with and take advantage of it. One way I try to do that is to smile more often. If I am noticed, it is probably because of my height. What I want people to remember is my joy. Being tall is not who I am, but it has helped me form my identity into the bold, self-assured person I am today.

For all the younger girls who are experiencing growth spurts and unsure of what they look like to others, I hope that they see me and feel inspired. I hope that they watch me on the volleyball or basketball court, or in my daily life and get excited to grow into

their bodies the way God made them to be. I hope that they see the confidence I portray and understand how that allows me to live boldly because I love every last inch of who I am.