“What Being Tall Means to Me” by Evan Moss

I was not always as magnificent and tall as I am now. I was born on the smaller side at just 20 inches; barely qualifying me for the 50th percentile. However, I grew quickly and in one week I grew out of my newborn size baby clothes. That trajectory never let off, and my parents had to do things like upgrade my bed because I was too tall for a crib and start potty training at 18 months because I was too big for diapers. As it turns out, adapting to change early because I had grown more than normal would become a theme in my life.

While I was always the tallest in my classes, I was also always the youngest. I was born at the end of July, so I was right on the age boundary of starting school young or waiting a year to start school older. My parents started me early because they were concerned that I would stand out too much if I waited, and grew, for another year. That meant having to develop quickly to adapt to the school environment.

People have often assumed that I was older than I really was. Adults have judged me for acting like a child and being immature when I was actually still a small child. It has been a struggle for me to have expectations beyond what was reasonable for my age, simply because of how I appeared.

Because I was always faced with heightened expectations, I was given opportunities to mature early. For example, when I was thirteen, I got offered a job by a man in my neighborhood that owned a lawncare company (and typically hired High School age kids). I accepted the offer and it was only later after I had been working for a while that my boss realized that I was only thirteen. I continued to work because I liked making money, however, it was hard for me to adapt to the working mindset, and it took me a while to become a valuable worker. I was given a lot of responsibility because I was the biggest and the tallest. I learned a good work ethic and, although it was difficult to adapt to, I am very grateful for the opportunity that I was given.

It is impossible for me to not stand out in my environment. This is both a curse and a blessing. I have struggled at times with anxiety. Knowing that I was sticking out in a crowd was hard on me, especially in Junior High. In Junior High, I would shrink down and try to make myself smaller to hide my height because I was so embarrassed. This was yet another forced opportunity. I had to learn confidence in a situation where I couldn’t hide. I learned to be confident in standing out and I chose to take the attitude that people aren’t going to judge me for being tall and, in fact, most people are jealous of it. Being tall forced me to get out of my anxiety bubble and develop self-confidence.

To me, being tall means being myself. I have never known what it is like to not be tall. I have had to learn, often earlier than is typical, to be proud of who I am and the impact

I can have on the world. Being tall has helped me love myself and become valuable to my community. I am grateful for my height and the challenges and opportunities that I have received because of it.