

What Being Tall Means to Me

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When hearing about a “tall bird”, most minds probably jump to the flightless ones: ostriches, emus, maybe even cassowaries. They’re powerful, beautiful, and slightly terrifying to be around. Believe it or not, I relate different aspects of myself to bird species (a magpie for problem-solving, an albatross for hope, etc.) and there’s one in particular that’s a manifestation of my height. It’s a bird that *flies* under the radar, overshadowed by the ostriches and emus. The sarus crane, with some standing at 6 feet, is the tallest flying bird in the world.

My “tallness”, like the sarus crane, has been a defining characteristic for my whole life. From towering over my peers in school, to constantly being asked if I play basketball (I don’t), and easily clearing most men when I wear high-heels, how could it not?

I am studying genetics right now in AP Biology and it’s been interesting to think about all the traits passed down to me. Everyone expected me to be tall because of my family, and sure enough, I am. My mom is 6’2” and my dad is 6’1.25”, and that quarter inch is very important to him. My uncles are 6’4” and 6’5”! My great-grandmother was still 6’ tall when she passed away at age 93.

There are so many pictures of my great-grandmother in the Charlotte Observer in the 1930s. In them, she’s just walking down the street! I can’t imagine being 6’ tall back then. Even my mom had to make her own clothes when she was in high school and she had to wear men’s shoes. I’m glad things have gotten easier, thanks to the generations before me blazing the tall lady trail.

My aunt, the “normal one”, is 5’8”, so well above average. I stand a little over 5’10”. Growing up around so many tall, lovely people has made me realize that height plays an important role in not just physical, but psychological development.

My mom knows what it’s like to be very tall and she encourages me to stand up straight, like a big balloon is pulling me right up. Standing up straight not only makes me look confident, but it also makes me feel confident. I’ve never once been ashamed of my height. Being tall is an asset. There’s the basic benefits of things like reaching the top shelf in the kitchen cabinet, but more than that, I think it adds to my uniqueness. You can change just about everything about yourself and your looks, but you can’t change your height. So why not embrace it and celebrate it!

The sarus crane may not be the tallest bird in the world, but it doesn't care about that. They're built the way they are for a reason, to thrive. The bird's long legs act like stilts in deep waters and its wings allow for domination of the skies. I know I'm tall for a reason, as well.

Just like everything else, being tall comes with both advantages and disadvantages. I choose to focus on the good parts. No matter what, I'll walk down the street in my heeled boots just like my great-grandmother did. I'll feel that balloon above my head. I'll tell my children about the lineage of strong, tall women from which they come. For now, biological research and visual arts are waiting for me at Meredith College, and I know just what to do: spread my wings and fly!