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Leslie Rasmussen, Contributor

Short Women In A Tall World

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I'll admit it; I'm only five feet tall. OK, that's not true; I'm actually under five feet. I don't say that very often, because just admitting it, even to myself, is not easy. There aren't a lot of people my height; so, the majority of people don't understand what it's like being this short. In my life, I've heard every comment about my stature from, "You know, good things come in small packages," to "Wow, you're so tiny, I want to squeeze you." At 6 that was fine, but at my age, it's patronizing. Most people know better than to comment if you're overweight, but for some reason, height is seen as everyone's business. And the fact that most people think their comments are compliments, is like me saying: "That extra weight around your middle is so cute, like having a St. Bernard strapped to your stomach; I just want to pet it."

In the fashion industry, they like to call people like me petite. What a cute name it would be if the word petite didn't actually mean women under five feet, four inches tall. 5"4? I'd give away my children if I could be 5"4. Being my height can make me feel self-conscious, especially when I buy clothes. I can't buy a pair of pants without having them hemmed. And when I say hemmed, I mean you could almost clothe a small village with the excess material that's cut off my pants. Recently, I was in a store where they sent the pants to an outside tailor to be hemmed. After being measured and leaving the store, I actually got a call from the tailor himself. He was sure the person who measured my

pants made a mistake, because after all, who could possibly need that much material taken off.

When you are my size, weight is also an issue. If I gain three pounds, it's like there's a boulder sticking out of my stomach. When you're taller and you gain three pounds, it might make your pinkie look bigger, which is probably not going to affect you zipping up your skirt.

My friends all tell me they wish they were small like me. Really, I don't think so. They can stand in a group of people and be heard. When I'm in a group of people, I have to yell louder because my head is at their chest. Sometimes, their stomachs and usually their chest and stomach doesn't think what I have said is that interesting.

My kids passed my height by the time they were preteens, which is hard when you're trying to discipline them. I've always told them they may be taller than me, but I'll always be meaner. But that's hard to sell when your 16-year-old hunches his body into a C-shape to hug you and your 14-year-old thinks it's funny to try to pick you up and carry you around the house. Although, on the positive side, when I can't reach something, I no longer have to climb on the cabinets. I just call one of my tall kids and they get it for me with only the smallest amount of teasing.

My height also seems to give people the license to treat me like a child. I once climbed on a seat on an airplane to smash my luggage into the overhead compartment. The flight attendant watched me for a while and when I completed the task, replied: "Good girl, you did it." This happened last week and the flight attendant was in her thirties.

Don't get me wrong, there are some positives to being this height. I

admit I've used my height to my advantage at times. I got into the movies for a child's price into my twenties, I was able to get good-looking men to reach things for me on top shelves at the market and I could always have an excuse to stand in front of people at a crowded exhibit. I'm also often told how young I look. I'm 50 years old, and despite a few wrinkles and gray hairs (the latter of which I do not have unless my hairdresser's out of town), people assume I'm more youthful than I am. This is nice, although thinking that just because a person is short means they're younger is pretty ridiculous. When I was pregnant with my first child, an older woman in her 60s approached me and proceeded to chastise me that young girls should not be getting pregnant at my age. When I told her I was 34, she looked at me like I had just opened my mouth and a unicorn flew out of it.

I realize that everyone has something about themselves they'd change, something they feel puts them at a disadvantage in their life. Mine just happens to be obvious to everyone. Even being short, I married a great guy, had two fabulous kids and enjoy my work. When it's all said and done, except for the fact you'll never catch me in flat shoes, I've come to terms with my height. Although, the next time you see an adult who's vertically challenged, remember they know they're short and don't need you to remind them. Please don't comment on it, unless it's to say they're the most beautiful person you've seen in a long time. That, I would take in a second.

