

THE
HEIGHT

R E P O R T

TALL MEN JUMP HIGHER, RUN FASTER,
LAND MORE JOBS, MAKE MORE MONEY,
GET MORE VOTES, AND WIN MORE WOMEN.
BUT IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET

BY RALPH KEYES

The main thing I wanted Jimmy Carter's aide to tell me was this: Is the President taller than I am? Carter's assistant rose from his desk and ran his eyes slowly up and down my frame. "Yes," he finally concluded. "I believe he is."

"How much taller?" I said.

"Oh, maybe an inch or two."

I must have looked dubious (not to say disappointed), because the man then called out to his secretaries, "How tall would you say the President is?"

"Five eight," a younger voice replied.

"Five ten," an older one quickly corrected.

The three huddled briefly and agreed on 5'10". Just a few days before, they recalled, Jimmy Carter needed to wear tails for The Gridiron Dinner. In order to rent them, they had asked him his height. Carter said he was 5'10".

"But a lot of people say that," I argued.

The President's assistant smiled slightly and said, "Are you suggesting that Jimmy Carter might tell a lie?"

||||| I. BIG MAN, | LITTLE MAN |

Perhaps you remember Randy Newman's song "Short People"—the one about short people having grubby little fingers and dirty little minds, got to pick 'em up just to say hello, no reason to live, and so on. By his own testimony, its author meant no offense. "It's just a joke," Newman explained when the song was released. "You don't think it'll bother anybody, do you?"

It did. After the song was banned by a number of radio stations,

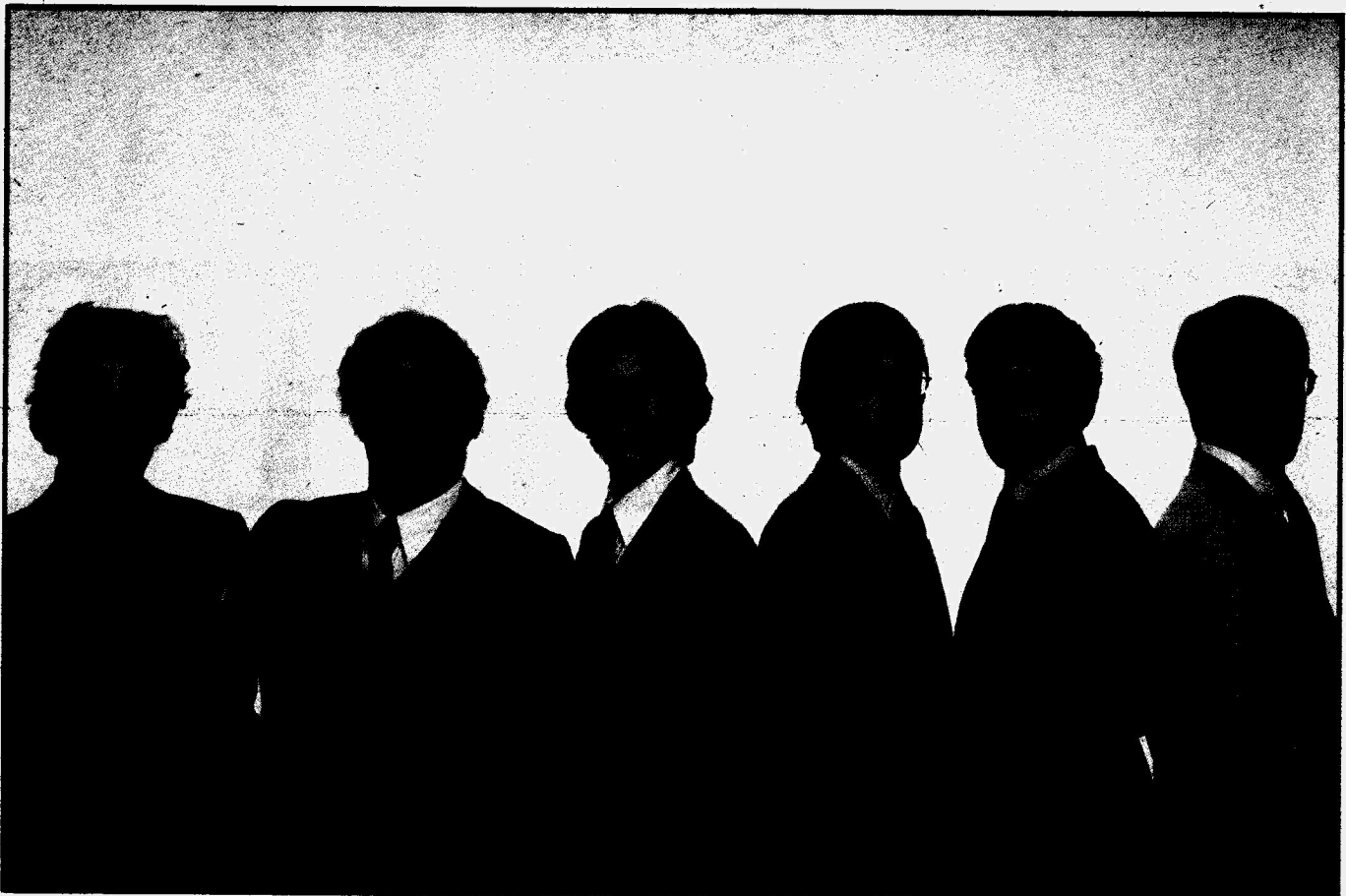
became the subject of three songs in response (each titled "Tall People"), and prompted a proposal for statewide prohibition by a 5'5" legislator in Maryland, Randy Newman realized some people didn't get the joke.

"I don't get why people are so offended by it," he said.

Perhaps only someone as average-size as Newman could have a problem understanding why some people are extremely sensitive about height. The fact is that we are obsessed with height, and consciously or not, we consistently attach values and associations to height that affect us—short, average, and tall—in every phase of our lives. Undeniably, in what has come to be the height sweepstakes, tall is ahead. Way ahead. Tallness stands head and shoulders above any other size in the competition for rewards social, sexual, financial, athletic, political, and practical. The tall man is not only able to see better in crowds, he is more likely to be welcomed into clubs, to win the best woman, to earn the highest income, to make the team, and to achieve high office. Big John Kenneth Galbraith, at 6'8.5" a beneficiary of all this, calls the bias in favor of size one of society's "most blatant and forgiven prejudices."

To get further information about how people of all sizes feel about their height, I distributed questionnaires on this subject. Among 200 responses to my "Twenty Questions About Height," it was rare for anyone of any height to come flat-out and say they liked their stature. One 6'4" stockbroker did tell me unequivocally in an interview that he liked being that height because he thought it had helped him get ahead in life, love, business, and basketball. But such pride of size was exceptional. Other men in the same range complained of problems finding clothes, friends, and a comfortable seat on a plane. Those in the middle range tended to accept their height without really considering its pros and cons. And those below the average (5'9" for men in America, 5'3.6" for women) invariably wished they were taller.

Ralph Keyes, who is 5'7.62", wrote Is There Life After High School? His next book, from which this article is adapted, is The Height of Your Life, to be published by Little, Brown.



IF AN EQUAL HEIGHTS AMENDMENT WERE PASSED, ALL MEN WOULD SEE EYE TO EYE (ABOVE). BUT UNTIL THE MILLENNIUM, RANKING BY STATURE PREVAILS (SAME MEN IN TRUE ORDER, BELOW).





THE HEIGHT WE REPORT TO THE WORLD IS A HODGEPODGE OF FACT, FANTASY, AND WHATEVER WE THINK WE CAN GET AWAY WITH.

Most of those who filled out my questionnaire admitted that at times they wanted to be a different height. And more women said this than men. Of the women who wanted to be a different height, only one wanted to be smaller—a woman 5'11" who thought she might have an easier time finding clothes if she were 5'9". A woman of 5'5" said she'd like to be either taller or smaller because "I hate being average." With these exceptions, the universal wish was to be taller. Even a woman of 5'9" said she'd prefer being 6' because there seemed to be "very real political and social advantages up there."

Since so few of us are happy with the feet and inches we've been granted, the height we report to the world tends to be a hodgepodge of fact, fantasy, and whatever we think we can get away with. Among a group of job seekers who were measured *after* they had recorded their heights on an application, ten out of ten were found to have rounded their heights upward by at least an inch. Another study found that one group of women who were warned in advance that they'd be measured reported their heights far more accurately than a second group who weren't warned but were also measured. Among my own "Twenty Questions About Height" was one asking if the respondent had ever lied about his or her height, and if so, why. Thirty-five out of 99 men admitted that they had lied, as did 28 out of 101 women.

I have had subjects repeatedly tell me heights that my eye knows aren't accurate. But because of the sensitivity surrounding this subject, I rarely say anything. It would be just too insulting—to a man especially. Because for men, height is more than a mere statistic; for men, it is quite simply a measure of manhood. "Men are six feet tall and above," says a 5'11" psychologist who regularly awards himself the extra inch.

I've seen Julius Caesar listed among Short Men in History and Tall Men in History, depending on what point the lister was trying to make. Although there is no known measurement of the man, we've debated for centuries whether Jesus was small and meek or tall and commanding. The sort of God we imagine him to be dictates the size we think he was.

We see a person's height according to our values. And because of that, we make mistakes. One of the more interesting results of my research was finding that over half of those I polled thought Jimmy Carter was the same size as Richard Nixon, or taller. In fact, he's two to three inches shorter. Studies of voter preference during presidential races found voters not only expressing their preference for a taller candidate but sometimes misperceiving their choice as taller. "That role gets caught up in so many perceptions," explains psychiatrist and former Carter aide Peter Bourne, "paternal ones, the kinglike role of the President, the hope that he'll be a superman embodying everything you want the country to be." We assume that bigger people are stronger people.

II. \$500 AN INCH

Some years ago, Leland Deck, then the director of personnel at the University of Pittsburgh, was waiting in front of the city's exclusive Duquesne Club while a friend was being interviewed for the club's vice-presidency. Since his friend was delayed, Deck amused himself by watching those in Pittsburgh's establishment go by. One thing about them was striking: their height. "They were," recalls Deck, "uniformly tall."

This observation intrigued Deck so much that he decided to survey a sample of Pitt's graduates and compare height with start-

ing salary. His results were striking: *Among ninety-one graduates of one class, Deck found there was a thousand-dollar-a-year salary penalty for being under 6' as compared with the preferred and rewarded height of 6'2".* Those under 6' averaged \$701 a month in starting salary, followed by 6 footers who were paid \$719; 6'1"ers, \$723; and 6'2"ers, \$788. (Above this height, figures declined once again.) The overall salary bonus for being 6'2" rather than 5'11" was 12.4 percent. The bonus for being cum laude was 4.0 percent. A follow-up study three years later confirmed these results. "Employers with first choice," Deck concluded, "get to pick the tallest candidates. Those with lower salaries to offer choose from among the shorter."

This conclusion did not apply just to the science and engineering graduates he had studied. Taller college teachers and librarians as well, he found, were starting at higher salaries. Among librarians, the bonus for being in the upper half of the height pool was more than three times the bonus for being in the upper half of their class academically. Leland Deck's findings, compiled between 1968 and 1971, were the first real confirmation of something suspected for a long time: The rewards for being tall in this society include money.

Adam J. Boxer, an investment banker with Merrill Lynch White Weld Capital Markets Group, produced a study on the relationship between height and income. These findings provide our most thorough and most striking confirmation yet of how height influences income.

In conjunction with labor economist Lee Benham, Boxer correlated income with height in a sample of 17,000 Army Air Corps cadets who were measured in 1943. Of this group, 10,000 reported their salaries after twelve years, and 5,000 after twenty-six years. As rounded off, these figures are as follows:

Height	Mean Initial Salary	1968 Mean Salary
5'3" - 5'5"	\$3,500	\$14,750
5'6" - 5'7"	3,750	16,500
5'8" - 5'9"	3,900	17,000
5'10" - 5'11"	3,900	17,500
6'0" - 6'1"	4,100	19,000
6'2" - 6'3"	4,000	18,500
6'4" - 6'6"	3,700	19,500

Obviously, in such a large and diverse group, factors other than height influence income. But even after allowing for such factors as IQ, educational level, and marital status, Boxer and Benham concluded that those 6' and over could still count on making around 8 percent more money annually than those below 5'6" simply as a reward for size. Boxer's terse summary: "We found a very definite income differential we could attribute solely to height."

The evidence that tall people make more money than short people could just be an illustration of supply and demand laws at work. If taller bodies are in greater demand than smaller bodies, you'll have to pay more to get one. Paying a premium for a tall employee could simply be the marketplace's way of confirming that there's competition for such employees. Is this the case?

In the only study I know of that posed such a question directly, marketing professor David Kurtz, of Eastern Michigan University, asked 140 sales recruiters whom they would choose between two equally qualified candidates—one who was 6'1" or one who was 5'5". Seventy-two percent of the sales recruiters said they'd



FOOLED YA

In *The Twilight Zone*, on my television set, Rod Serling loomed very large, but when I met him, he was about a foot shorter than I'd expected. Mario Andretti says he's been told "You're so short!" so often that it surprises him when he isn't told this. Frank Perdue, the chicken man, seems like Elmer Fudd in-

carnate. Low fives, right? Add a foot. Perdue stands 6 feet tall and is constantly being told he's much taller than people expect him to be. So is Julia Child, who's an inch or two taller than Perdue.

Here's a little pocket guide that you can clip 'n' carry, a list of people in the public eye who regularly fool us:

Smaller Than You Might Imagine

Marlon Brando	Kirk Douglas	Jane Fonda
Charles Bronson	Mae West	Buckminster Fuller
Johnny Carson	Dick Cavett	Patty Hearst
Robert Conrad	Mick Jagger	Katharine Hepburn
Walter Cronkite	Jann Wenner	Reggie Jackson
Robert De Niro	Humphrey Bogart	Paul Newman

Taller Than You Might Imagine

Warren Beatty	Billy Martin	Tom Snyder
Ingrid Bergman	Frank Perdue	Lowell Weicker
H. Rap Brown	Gilda Radner	Clint Eastwood
Howard Cosell	Julia Child	
David Frost	Cybill Shepherd	
Jerry Lewis	Ronald Reagan	

take the taller candidate, 27 percent expressed no preference, and one alone said he'd take the smaller guy. After his results appeared in print, Kurtz said the biggest response he got was from corporate personnel officers, with "most acknowledging it was true."

On the other side of the interviewing table, economist John Kenneth Galbraith says he's experienced his tallness as a competitive asset on the job market. At 6'8.5", he explains, "my height gave me a range of opportunity that I would never have had otherwise, because people always remember the guy whose head stands high above the others when they are trying to think of somebody for a job."

But such a hiring bias is extremely hard to document. Although discrimination in hiring against racial minorities, ethnic groups, and women has been studied to a fare-thee-well, discrimination by height is virtually untouched as a subject of serious inquiry.

In a rare attempt to survey height discrimination in jobs, *U.S. News & World Report* concluded that such discrimination could affect up to half of all working Americans but is virtually impossible to get out into the open. Even those who are targets of such discrimination may not want it brought out. A short midwestern banking executive sent word to *U.S. News & World Report* through his secretary that he didn't want even to be mentioned in an article on height discrimination. A further problem, this report suggested, is that vocational bias against the short can be subtle. A short person turned down for a job due to lack of stature will not normally be told that this is the reason. It's "like fighting a ghost," one employment-firm executive explains of his difficulty in dealing with height discrimination among employers.

To discover if height biases among employers affect the work of those regularly offering job candidates, I polled some employment agencies. Robert Half, president of the country's largest employment agency for accountants and financial officers, says indeed it's been his experience that tall people have an easier time being hired because "they fulfill an image, they look the part." Half has also found that the better paying the job, the more both short and overweight candidates are penalized. "But in my opinion, short is worse than overweight," he says, "because something can be done about overweight. Short—if you're short, you're short. It's worse because it's cruel."

One executive recruiter on Wall Street who did not want to be quoted by name tells me he's found that especially for high-visibility jobs—presidents, executive vice-presidents, stockholder representatives—and more often for consumer-oriented companies with big ad budgets, tallness is nearly a prerequisite for candidates. He and his colleagues find this value so implicitly adhered

to for \$50,000-a-year-and-up jobs that they consider it a joke. "You send over two people who are equally qualified," he explains, "and they'll pick the taller, better-looking guy every time."

Tall himself, the recruiter adds that on occasion he's had clients come right out and say they wanted prospects his size. It's a matter of "cosmetics," he explains. "Sometimes, being professional, I'll recommend a guy who doesn't look as good, but they'll keep on pushing for height. Sometimes they get stiffed and deserve it. A short guy might have been better."

Other recruiters said they find it uncommon, especially in today's legal climate, for a client to come right out and ask for a particular size of candidate. But such a desire can still be implicit. Consider a company such as IBM. Tom Mechling (6'2"), IBM's former director of corporate information, says that for visible representatives of that company—salesmen, public relations people, corporate officers—an unwritten rule has historically given preference to tall. This was never spelled out, says Mechling of his years at IBM in the mid-Sixties. You just knew what "image" was expected in such slots. "It was a tradition," he explains, "that IBM had a big, robust sales staff. In appearance they wanted salesmen to look domineering, aggressive. Tallness was part of that." Since corporate officers tended to percolate up from the sales staff, Mechling adds, this hiring bias imbued the whole company. T. Vincent Learson (6'6"), who went on to become the company's chairman, has been described in a book on IBM as "among the biggest of the hundreds of big men in a corporation whose leadership over the years looked with favor on outsized specimens. . . ."

I've always assumed that height in business was primarily a man's issue and dealt with on different terms by women—when dealt with by them at all. I couldn't have been more mistaken. As I've discovered throughout this project, women are painfully aware of who's biggest and every bit as concerned as a man when it isn't they.

Women are increasingly judged on male terms, and height is no less a part of these terms than it has always been for men. Smaller men have had a lifetime to resign themselves, however bitterly, to the injustice of such judgment. Smaller women haven't. To the contrary, until quite recently they had every assurance of being the cultural ideal: petite, diminutive, demure.

But it isn't the style of body that has changed for women so much as the style of being. It's no longer fashionable to be a small woman, for the same reason it's never been fashionable to be a small man: Lack of size implies lack of clout. When it was in vogue for women to be weak, fragile, and dependent, small size was the physical expression of that vogue.



SHORT PEOPLE ARE HELD STRICTLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR LAPSE OF JUDGMENT IN CHOOSING NOT TO GROW UP. THEIR PSYCHES ARE PUBLIC PROPERTY.



Short women are infantilized even more than men. This diminution takes many forms. One form is simply verbal: being constantly called "honey," "dear," and "you cute little thing." Another form involves being mistaken for a child—your husband's daughter, say, or your daughter's playmate. But the most humiliating forms of infantilization are physical ones. These range from being elaborately pulled into men's laps to simple pats on the head.

The overall effect of such repeated experiences, smaller women tell me, is to make them feel childish and insignificant. Men's size can be a very effective aid in keeping such women in their place. But it's not only men who use this tool. A 5'1.5" reporter of twenty-five recalls a tough interview with a bigger woman who began by saying, "Why, you're just a baby!" and said little thereafter.

Consultant Rosabeth Moss Kanter, author of *Men and Women of the Corporation*, says it's her observation that the executives she works with seem a uniformly tall lot. One source of Dr. Kanter's observation is personal perspective. At 5'3", she spends the most painful parts of her consulting day looking up. "I do my best work sitting down," she says. "Actually I do my best work standing up when everybody else is sitting down."

Unfortunately this isn't always possible. Especially when the day's done and everybody goes out for drinks, Kanter finds she spends a lot of time with her neck crooked.

Being that much shorter than a short man, a small woman in the job market has double trouble. One of the primary complaints made by such women in interviews with me and on the questionnaire was their unusual difficulties in finding work.

At times this was made explicit. A public relations woman of 5'1" was originally turned down by a stock exchange as too short to write on their blackboard. A 5' secretary was told by a major Boston department store that she was too small for their sales force. (At least they weren't lying, she says; to this day, the woman has to look up to all the salespeople in that store.)

Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, a slight figure of average height and weighing about ninety pounds, couldn't find work after college even as a teacher's aide until, with characteristic indignation, she exploded, "Don't judge me by my size," and was given a successful tryout.

It would be foolish (to say nothing of legally risky) for someone with a job to offer to eliminate short women out of hand. But when I inquired informally of those with jobs to offer if they'd fill them with a short woman, the clarity of their responses was striking. No one I asked said he'd seriously consider a short woman for an "outside" job—for "inside" work such as clerical, perhaps, but not for a job involving public contact.

Short women in business have a real credibility problem. Even when they make it big, their success is recognized with a titter. "Barely 5 feet tall," says *Newsweek* of the head of Waterman pen and ink company, "blond and attractive Francine Gomez seems more like a pretty china doll than the chairman and chief executive of a well-known French corporation."

Letitia Baldrige once confessed to reporter Fred Katz that she didn't think her career in business would have progressed nearly so well had she not been just over 6' tall. After working for Burlington Industries, Tiffany & Co., and The Merchandise Mart, in Chicago, Ms. Baldrige now runs her own public relations firm.

"It gives me the upper hand in some ways" is the way a 6' financial analyst for a Wall Street investment firm tells me how her

height influences life on the job. Among men especially, she feels no problem being taken seriously, due in part to the credibility imparted by her size. She doesn't doubt that a degree of intimidation might also be involved—especially with smaller male colleagues. But this can also present problems. Her boss, for example, more than half a foot shorter, will often bark, "Sit down! I can't talk to you. You're like the Eiffel Tower!"

Women at least have the option of putting on or taking off heels. Tall men needn't exercise too much imagination in height maneuvers at work. All they have to do is sidle up to a smaller colleague and glare down upon him. Or rise s-l-o-w-l-y from their chair at a meeting to let others observe inch-by-inch the grandeur rising before them. Smaller men must be more resourceful.

However, there are signs that the employment picture for smalls, both men and women, may be improving. Robert Half says that unlike a few years ago, he is no longer asked to send only candidates who are 6' or over for certain jobs. At Manhattan's Life Extension Institute, Dr. Harry Johnson recently tabulated the measured heights of 500 executives getting physical examinations and, to his surprise, found that they averaged 5'9.2"—a mere fraction of an inch over the male norm. And at IBM, Frank Cary, who is reputedly under 6', is now the chairman.

||| THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER |||

To understand how tall bodies got such a good reputation, we must look to man's mind. Depending on its needs, wishes, and associations, the mind lies to the eye about height. This is why eyewitness reports of criminals' sizes are so undependable. Fear can be a great magnifier. In fact, our eyes are generally a poor judge of height. A person may look tall because he or she reminds us of someone else who's tall or may look small because we wish this upon the person; our eyes can be influenced by our wish to "belittle" someone. Howard Cosell is an authentic 6 footer, but we commonly perceive him as smaller because our minds cut him down to size. And Cosell is so mouthy; he doesn't act tall. By contrast, before Henry Kissinger married a woman so much taller—when he was simply one of the world's most powerful men—who had an inkling that he was such a squirt?

Our perception of height is such a product of our feelings that even the same person can shoot up or down in our estimation, depending on where we stand with that person. A 6'1" husband tells me his 5'4" wife sees him as huge, dark, and looming when they're not getting along; small, soft, and cuddly when they are.

Size is strictly a relative concept. Things are only small or large in relation to other things. This principle has long been exploited by moviemakers. Movie sets are normally built smaller than life. This not only makes them easier to fit in the frame of a film but makes every actor on such a set look larger. Even John Wayne was made to loom larger than life with the help of lowered doorways that made his frame look bigger by contrast.

The level at which our eyes meet another's is a critical factor in perceived height. Three very important phrases in the English language remind us regularly of the relationship between height and eye contact. These are "look up to," "look straight in the eye," and "look down on."

Obviously such phrases have less to do with physical than psychological interaction. Who looks up to whom, who deals eye to eye, and who gets looked down on are very important issues in this society.

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OPPOSITES ATTRACT



The taboo against women dating men shorter than themselves is among the strictest of this society. As far away as the state of Kerala, in India's tropical south, it's considered appropriate by Hindus for the groom to be a coconut taller than his bride. Even in those societies that are more bound than others by this taboo, there are couples who flout it. In larger cities, one can see signs of an *Annie Hall* syndrome as tall women rest their arms on the shoulders of small lovers. But you needn't travel very far to find that the taboo against women be-

ing taller than men is alive, well, and flourishing.

Flouting the taboo takes courage. One man of 5'7" who is married to a taller woman says he puts up with every indignity except two. He won't help his 6'2" wife with her coat or hold an umbrella over her head. Others have told me of giving up in despair over the hoots, whistles, jeers, howls, and insinuating remarks that were their constant lot in public.

Nevertheless, there have been pioneers in breaking this taboo, and they include:

Paul and Anne Anka	Arte and Gisela Johnson	Senator John Tower and his wife, Lilla
Richard Ben-Veniste and Mary Travers	Henry and Nancy Kissinger	Paul and Katie Williams
Carlo Ponti and Sophia Loren	Billy and Sybil Carter	Mickey Rooney and Ava Gardner
Robert De Niro and Diahnn Abbott	Guru and Marolyn Maharaj Ji	Robin and Valerie Williams
Dustin Hoffman and Anne Byrne	Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly	Philippe Junot and Princess Caroline
Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall	Arthur and Alexandra Schlesinger	Marvin and Jeanne Mandel
King Hussein and Lisa Halaby	Paul Simon and Shelley Duvall	Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara
Ron Samuels and Lynda "Wonder Woman" Carter	Willie and Cynthia Shoemaker	Norman Mailer and Norris Church

"Gaze behavior" is an important means of sorting out who stands where. Those who are supposed to be above the rest of us have historically been given a boost in the form of thrones, platforms, or pulpits. Bowing, curtsying, and prostration provide insurance that the looked-down-on will in fact be looking up.

When 6'10" Bill Russell was to meet Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, the small monarch insisted that their meeting take place in the back of his limousine. It wouldn't do for such as himself, the king explained, to have to look up so far during an audience.

Gaze level has a lot to do with how women and men relate. The clout of Bess Myerson has been attributed to the fact that being nearly 6' tall, she looks many men in the eye. By contrast, a 6'4" businessman told me that on the rare occasions when he had met a woman who didn't look up to him, he experienced extreme discomfort. "I'm used to looking down at women," he explained. "I like to have the psychological edge."

A man of 5'5" told me of playfully putting on a woman's wedgies at a dinner party with old friends. Once he stood up and began to walk around, he was startled to discover how different the world looked. That little change in visual angle made even old friends' faces take on entirely different casts. But even more important than the way such faces looked from on high was the way they felt, looking up into his eyes whereas before they had looked down. The man said he enjoyed this experience immensely. He's not sure his friends did.

IV. NAPOLEON AND THE GREAT DIVIDE

There is one disadvantage to being tall. Society expects a tall man to be restrained. Because everyone assumes a tall man to be extra powerful, he is never supposed to exercise his power directly. On the other hand, short people can be as feisty as they like. It's expected of them and discounted. From the time he first begins to shoot up over the heads of his playmates, a tall boy gets constant messages, subtle and overt, that he has to restrain himself; he must learn to hold things in and never lose control because if he does, he might hurt someone.

Moreover, tall bodies for some reason are considered public property—much like the Statue of Liberty, the Washington Monument, or the Eiffel Tower—and are treated with about as much sensitivity. We generally keep our racial comments to ourselves.

It's never been appropriate to comment on nose size. Whistling at women has declined over time, but not commentary on tall bodies.

In response to jokes about his height, a tall man has little alternative but to shuffle and grin. Occasionally, though, he will lose patience and tell those who ask that he's a jockey, not a basketball player, or that "the weather's fine up here. How is it down around my ass?" One basketball player, asked about "the weather up there," simply poured the Coke he was drinking onto the questioner's head and replied, "Raining."

But just as a tall person's body is public property, so is a short person's psyche. Theories abound about why little guys are the way they are. Rarely are such theories flattering. "[Henry] Winkler," observes a letter writer to *Playboy*, "truly suffers from the 5'6" syndrome." "Mick Jagger," writes a woman to *People*, "has . . . a short man's complex." By friend and foe alike, Robert Kennedy's personality was routinely explained with reference to his being the runt of the Kennedy litter—half a head shorter than John or Ted. Conservative author Ralph de Toledano even attributed Kennedy's compassion for the poor to his height, suggesting that "with the less privileged, he did not need to compensate for his diminutive size. . . ."

Short people are generally held strictly accountable for their lapse of judgment in choosing not to grow up. John Kenneth Galbraith tells of a conversation he held after John Kennedy's funeral with his size mate Charles de Gaulle. Galbraith had just been chatting with Russia's Anastas Mikoyan, so "De Gaulle began by pointing to Mr. Mikoyan," he recalls, "and asking why I had been conversing with such a short man. I said he obviously agreed with me that the world belongs to the tall men. They are more visible, therefore their behavior is better and, accordingly, they are to be trusted. He said that he agreed, and added, 'It is important that we be merciless with those who are too small.'"

But the ultimate presumption in "analyzing" the short person is found in a speech delivered by Colonel Bull Meecham in Pat Conroy's novel *The Great Santini*:

Let me tell you my theory of small men, Captain, then let me hear what you think . . . Give me a guy less than five feet eight, Johnson, and I'll give you a real bastard nine times out of ten. It has been my experience that short men get a chip on their shoulders as big as an aircraft carrier. They're pissed off at life and God and everybody else just because they're

midgets. They come into the Marine Corps just so they can be proud and tough once in their lives. They like to strut around in their uniforms, flashing their wings around and pretending their dicks are as long as anyone else's. I'm a blunt man, Johnson, and I'll tell you that I always keep my eye out for a little guy because I know he's down there low with his hands around my nuts waiting for a chance to give me the big squeeze. What do you have to say about my theory?

If one man in history were chosen to epitomize our conception of the short person's psyche, it would be Napoleon. The regularity with which we fall back on a man who has been dead well over a century to explain contemporary short behavior illustrates how little we actually know about this issue. Napoleonic he may have been, but France's emperor was *not* short. Napoleon was of rather average size for his time and place.

To pin down Napoleon's actual height, I wrote to the Musée de l'Armée, in Paris, which houses comprehensive information on Napoleon's physical appearance (including old uniforms). The museum adviser, a Colonel MacCarthy, replied: "The height of Napoleon was 5 feet 7 inches . . . This measurement was recorded in the memoirs of M. Darling, carpenter of Sainte-Hélène who







was appointed to construct Napoleon's coffin. I think that we can consider this measure as completely correct."

Colonel MacCarthy speculated that the French emperor may have been perceived as smaller, since he was shorter than most of his aides and dressed in simple style in contrast to the feathers and braids of those in his court. A second cause of the error, as pointed out in a recent book by English physician Frank Richardson, is that an early mistranslation from French to English measurements gave Napoleon's height as about 5'2". This mistake has been passed along in most subsequent writing about Napoleon.

So how did Napoleon become history's quintessential little guy, the only man since Oedipus to get a complex named after him? To a large degree, we have psychiatrist Alfred Adler to thank for this—and a lot of things. Not tall himself, Freud's early associate and subsequent rival developed the "inferiority complex" and "overcompensation" theories and a range of other psychological concepts that we usually neglect to attribute to him. Overcompensation, according to Adler, is a typical response to physical deficiency, including short stature. And in suggesting in an essay that politics is a popular haven for overcompensators, Adler himself

ESQUIRE'S OFFICIAL

IF YOU ARE | YOU'RE ABOUT AS TALL AS | THE WORLD SEES YOU AS | YOU SEE THE WORLD AS | JOBS YOU'RE LIKELY TO HOLD | YOU'RE PARTIAL TO

 5'1" and under	Willie Shoemaker	runt	lots of kneecaps	duct crawler, Sony executive	star sapphire pinkie rings
 5'1" to 5'6"	Mickey Rooney	shrimp	lots of armpits	ball boy, bellboy, coffee-wagon attendant	skinny-brim fedoras
 5'6" to 5'10"	Dick Cavett	wimp	lots of bridgework	drummer, presidential assassin, William Morris agent	Gucci shoes with taps
 5'10" to 6'2"	George Hamilton	an aging movie star who somehow got lucky lately	an aging pretty-boy face (that somehow got lucky lately) in the mirror	movie roles calling for an aging star who somehow got lucky lately	Brylcreem, Man-Tan, and other unguents
 6'2" to 6'9"	J. K. Galbraith	slats	lots of bald pates	RCA executive, designated hitter	string ties*
 6'9" and above	Wilt Chamberlain	Annapurna	a dim prospect	midway attraction	suspenders and black socks with garters

fell back on "Napoleon being the favorite hero."

Even if we hadn't had Napoleon at hand to explain short behavior, we'd have come up with someone else—Fiorello LaGuardia, perhaps, or maybe Richard Dreyfuss. Whether Napoleon was actually short or even acted short is immaterial. His value to us is strictly as a symbol, a way to keep from considering seriously a dimension of life that makes everyone uneasy. The whole "problem" of understanding a short person's behavior makes everybody nervous: Short people wish the issue would just go away; average-size people often wish short people would just go away.

V. OUTGROWING IT ALL

As babies in a grown-up world—midgets among giants—we make an accurate association between size and power. Bodies bigger than ours control us. The bodies we look up to are very strong. Every one of them. This equation is probably one of the earliest in a baby's consciousness and one of the most lasting. Parent-child metaphors are at the heart of our grown-up feelings about tallness and smallness. The grip of the infant's eye is very strong.

Around tall people, it's easy to slip into feeling like a kid with-

out even knowing this is going on. The act of looking up works like a trigger, releasing a mixture of awe, fear, and envy left over from a time when everyone we looked up to controlled us.

"The concept of his body," explained developmental psychologist Boyd McCandless, "is central to one's concept of himself. One lives with his body twenty-four hours a day from birth until death. Its characteristics, such as strength, proportion, and attractiveness, are intimately related to how society responds to a person. Since social feedback shapes the self-concept, it is easily seen that the interaction of body and self-concept is inevitable and important."

The end result, says McCandless, is not a self-fulfilling prophecy so much as a "social-fulfilling prophecy," in which our behavior is suited in large degree to that expected from someone with the type of body we inhabit. You can break out of the grip of a size-suited style, but it's difficult to do so. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift saw the differences in men's heights as a cosmic joke in which both Gulliver and the Lilliputians were victims of their own pride. The long and the short of it, then, is not height itself but the confused and inappropriate perceptions we have of ourselves and others. We haven't come far since Gulliver. #

HEIGHT CHART

YOUR FREE TIME IS SPENT | WOMEN YOU LUST FOR / WOMEN WHO LUST FOR YOU | ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE MOVIES/BOOKS IS | YOU LIKE TO DRINK

trying to figure out what's on top of the refrigerator	Julie Newmar/Phyllis Diller	<i>The Incredible Shrinking Man/ Little Women</i>	Perrier with a caper
playing Ping-Pong	Montserrat Caballé/Fanne Foxe	<i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs/ Of Mice and Men</i>	grasshoppers
jogging	Lesley-Anne Down/Erica Jong	<i>Singin' in the Rain/ The World According to Garp</i>	pink squirrels
finding new and exciting places to apply your unguents	Carroll Baker/Carol Lynley	<i>Love at First Bite/ Looking Good</i>	bloody marys
skiing	Brooke Shields/Joyce Maynard	<i>Walking Tall/ Across the River and into the Trees</i>	piña colada with a gardenia
eating the bananas on top of the refrigerator at their precise moment of ripeness	Zsa Zsa Gabor/Eva Gabor	<i>Giant/ Gulliver's Travels</i>	a yard of ale

*Some might say leisure suits, but a recent poll of fashion editors concludes that leisure suits are a horizontal statement.