

Robert Grede is **TOO TALL**

I'm taller than you. At 6 feet 7 inches, I'm in the freak zone of the bell curve, taller than 99.7 percent of the population.

Some say I'm also smarter and likely to earn more money.

"Tall people perform significantly better on cognitive tests," according to a Princeton University study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research. And "on average, tall people earn more," says the study.

That makes me ten inches richer than Warren Buffet and five inches smarter than President Obama. (I like to think I'm a whole foot smarter than George W.)

That also makes the Washington Wizards smarter than the Supreme Court. And I don't even want to think about Yao Ming.

Being tall has lots of advantages. Tall people almost always get to ride shotgun. We can see over a crowd, reach the top of cupboards, or screw in a light bulb, no stepstool required. And we can always tell who's wearing a toupee.

According to a study of the Fortune 500 companies, the average male CEO is six feet tall, a lofty three inches taller than the U.S. average. A third are over 6' 2", taller than 96% of the population. Fewer than three percent are 5'7" or less.

Tall people seem to catch a break in other ways. Take a picture of two men standing next to each other and ask somebody which one is the janitor and which is the college professor. Studies show the vast majority will pick the taller man to be the prof.

Likewise, tell them one is an airline pilot and the other a stevedore, a similar majority will assume the pilot is the taller.

All this would make the average tall person pretty smug. If we hadn't just smacked our head on a low doorway.

Fact is, tall has its disadvantages, too.

We have to arrive early to the movies so we don't sit in front of anyone. Clothes don't fit. We're always in the back row in photos. Spelunking is out of the question.

In grade school, when there was a fire alarm, we all lined up from shortest to tallest. As if maybe tall people burn slower?



Robert Grede is a best-selling author and public speaker

Hotel beds can't have a foot rail. Untuck the sheets so your feet can hang over. Watch out for ceiling fans. The bumps on my head would drive a phrenologist crazy.

Typical chairs, designed for the middle of the bell curve, force our backs into pretzel positions. Did you ever sit in a chair designed for a kindergartner? That's pretty much what we deal with every day. There are only a handful of cars that accommodate guys my size. And don't even get me started about airline seats.

Average-height people are intimidated, or find us arrogant or standoffish. We're left out of conversations in noisy bars. The only way to hear is to bend over so our ears are at everyone else's level.

Perfect strangers seem to find pleasure in the absurdity. As if the weather might actually be different up here? How about their concern for our safety? "There's a full moon so watch your head!" or, "Fall down and you're halfway home!"



confess I am often tempted with a snappy retort:

Q: *"Do you play basketball?"*

A: *"Yes, and do you play miniature golf?"*

or

Q: *"How tall are you?"*

A: *"I'm six foot seven, ma'am. How much do you weigh?"*

OK, probably not. But do other tall people feel the way I do?

I'm thinking maybe we can get the American Disabilities Act to include tall folks. According to the ADA, no one may discriminate against those who have some form of disability.

Isn't Tall a disability?

Clothing manufacturers would not be allowed to charge extra for Tall sizes. Airplane exit rows would be reserved for those over six feet. Cars would have ample headroom. "Long drink of water" and "Stretch" would be un-PC, akin to "cripple."

Undisputedly, Americans are getting taller. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that the average height of American men, 20 to 74, is 5'9½", up from 5'8" in 1960. And women average 5'5", up nearly two inches. The planet – carmakers, clothing manufacturers, airlines and air travelers – will need to adapt.

So please, when you spot somebody who towers over you, try to refrain from asking how towering he or she might be.

Sometime, just to mess with you, I might tell you, "I'm five foot 19."

