

SMALL MEN WHO MADE IT

BIG

Short Stories of People
Who Beat Long Odds



SMALL MEN WHO MADE IT BIG

Lee Silber

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Written, designed, and "edited" by Lee Silber

This mini book is dedicated to my sons, Ethan and Evan.

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DON'T SKIP THIS

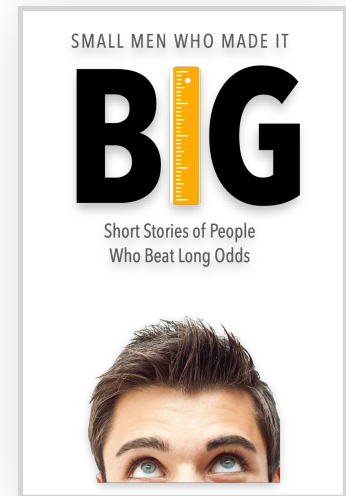
The Big Idea

The average height for men is 5 feet 9 inches. For those of us who fall short of that height (pun intended) it may seem we are “less than” at times.

This mini book contains examples of people under 5'-8" but didn't let that stop them from making it in fields where height sometimes matters.

The purpose of this book is for you, the reader, to never let a lack of stature make you feel like there is something you can't do—even play in the NBA*.

—Lee Silber



Everyone in this book is under 5'-8" tall and when possible, their published height is included.

* Muggsy Bogues excelled in the NBA at 5'-3" tall.

MUSIC

Kendrick Lamar

Snoop Dog is 6'-5", but many rappers are short—Eazy-E, Lil Wayne, and Big Boi are all under 5'-7"—including Kendrick Lamar, considered one of the most influential rappers of all time.

Kendrick's small stature wasn't his biggest challenge, it's where he grew up—in Section 8 housing in Compton, California. His parents relied on welfare and worked at McDonald's and KFC (respectfully) while Lamar stayed out of trouble and didn't let where he's from keep him from where he was going.



Kendrick Lamar is somewhere between 5'-4" and 5'-6" tall, but he is a giant in the rap industry.

* Kendrick is named after Eddie Kendrick of the Temptations.

MUSIC

Jimmy Buffett

Jimmy Buffett is not your typical rock star—in many ways he’s better and smarter. Still, at 5’-6” tall he doesn’t necessarily look the part. To his credit he’s an excellent songwriter and prolific performer, but also an average singer and guitar player. So what does he have that other musicians don’t? Confidence.

Nobody ever talks about Jimmy Buffett’s height, but they do praise his business acumen, his ability to turn a phrase (in books and in song), and his envious lifestyle as pilot and waterman.



Jimmy Buffett (5’-6”) has hits in several genres—best selling books in multiple categories, business successes that include restaurants and retail stores, appearances as an actor in TV and movies, and of course, sold out concert tours.

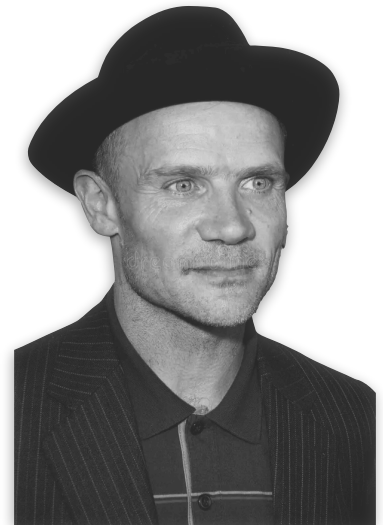
* Buffett officially became a billionaire in 2023.

MUSIC

"Flea"

Michael Balzary? I know, nothing. How about, "Flea"? Oh, yeah, the incredible bass player in the Red Hot Chili Peppers. At 5'-6" you would think his nickname comes from his size. Instead, it comes from being unable to sit still—which serves him well when on stage.

A self-described social outcast in school, his home life wasn't much better. Flea's stepfather was a violent alcoholic who eventually became involved in shoot-outs with police. Flea grew up terrified of his parents—music was his savior. Find and follow your passion.



Flea (5'-6") is also an actor and appears in the Back to the Future trilogy with Michael J. Fox (5'-4").

* With a net worth of \$160 million, Flea is the wealthiest RHCP.

MUSIC

Amel Pineda

Some of the best lead singers are short –Bono, Roger Daltry, and Bruce Dickinson (Iron Maiden) are all 5'-6". Van Morrison and Jon Anderson (Yes) are both 5'-5". Klaus Meine (Scorpions) Ronnie James Dio, and Journey's Abel Pineda check in at 5'-4"–but seem larger than life on stage.

Pineda was homeless and singing for food on the streets of Manila when Journey guitarist Neil Schon stumbled upon a YouTube video of Abel and couldn't believe how much he sounded like former frontman Steve Perry. After a life of hardships he got his big break.



Amel Pineda (5'-4") replaced Steve Perry (5'-7") as Journey's frontman.

** Amel Pineda is now worth rough \$20 million dollars.*

BONUS LIST

Musicians

Music is an area where size doesn't matter. Just look at this list for proof.

Paul Simon	5'-3"
John Oates	5'-4"
Billy Joel	5'-5"
Bruno Mars	5'-5"
Kenny Chesney	5'-6"
Phil Collins	5'-6"
Quincy Jones	5'-6"
Ringo Starr	5'-6"
Tony Bennett	5'-7"
Bob Marley	5'-7"
Pit Bull	5'-7"
Eddie Vedder	5'-7"



At 5'-2", Prince, along with Angus and Malcolm Young of AC/DC are the smallest musicians to make it big.

** Irving Azoff (at 5'-3") was a powerhouse behind the scenes.*

Jack Black

At 5'-6" and 200-plus pounds, Jack Black is an unlikely movie star, but that's exactly what he is. He's funny, talented, and most of all, confident. When he walks into a room or on the red carpet he has a presence about him. Instead of trying to look taller or thinner, he simply embraces who he is—he owns it.

On screen he's the same way. In *School of Rock* and *Nacho Libre* (and as the voice in *Kung Fu Panda*) he's the improbable hero who beats the odds. Sometimes not being what people expect, but being who we are and better than expected is our superpower.



Jack Black (5'-6") is a very talented musician and along with Kyle Glass (5'-8") record, perform, and tour as Tenacious D.

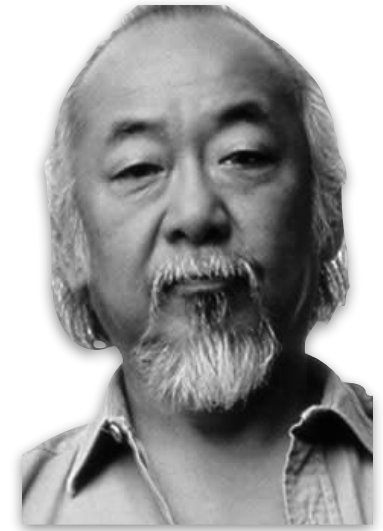
* Original *Jumanji* star Robin Williams was 5'-7".

Pat Morita

You can name the 5'-3" movie stars on one hand: Joe Pesci, Kevin Hart, Patton Oswalt, Rob Schneider, and Pat Morita. Those are long odds for someone who ran a restaurant and worked office jobs before deciding to give comedy and acting a try in his mid-thirties.

As a child, Morita spent most of his childhood in a hospital due to illness and was told he would never walk. At the age of eleven, he walked out of the hospital . . . but straight into a Japanese internment camp.

Pat proves your past doesn't determine your future.



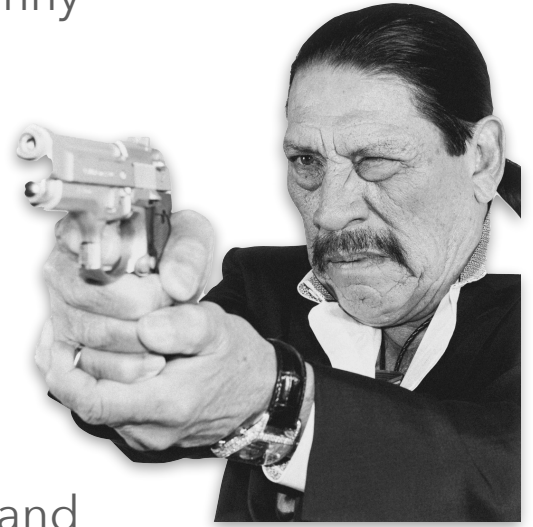
Ralph Macchio who plays Daniel in the Karate Kid movies was just slightly taller (5'8") than Mr. Miyagi (5'-3").

* *Appeared in M*A*S*H, Sanford and Son, and Happy Days.*

Danny Trejo

Before becoming a busy actor, Danny lived a life of crime and paid the price for it. He was incarcerated as a juvenile and went to prison as an adult, serving time at San Quentin and Folsom. While at Soledad Prison, Trejo entered a 12-step program and began to turn his life around.

After his release, the 5'-6" ex-con worked odd jobs, as a gardener, and as an extra in films. His colorful background and time in prison led to related roles and today he's a leading man and television and movie star—proving anything is possible if you embrace your strengths.



At 5'6", Danny Trejo won boxing titles as a lightweight and welterweight.

* Trejo also owns a successful chain of restaurants.

ENTERTAINERS

Daniel Radcliffe

Harry Potter was resilient, resourceful, and brave—he was also only 5'-5". It's hard to imagine anyone other than Daniel Radcliffe playing the role of Harry even though in the book Harry Potter is written as slightly taller.

Like his character, Radcliffe was not a stellar student. Since he was young Radcliffe suffered from a disease that at times make it hard for him to do simple things like write or type.

Having found his calling (acting) at an early age was an advantage and allowed him to do what he did best.



Other stars the same height as Daniel Radcliffe (5'-5") include: Jason Alexander, Scott Caan, Nathan Lane, David Spade, and Henry Winkler.

* Starred in *Now You See Me 2* with Jesse Eisenberg (5'-5").

BONUS LIST

Entertainers

Some stars wear lifts to compensate for height, others “own it” and embrace it.

Danny DeVito	5'-0"
David Faustino	5'-3"
Seth Green	5'-4"
Ken Jeong	5'-4"
Breckin Meyer	5'-4"
BD Wong	5'-4"
Johnny Galecki	5'-5"
Billy Crystal	5'-6"
Dustin Hoffman	5'-6"
Ben Stiller	5'-6"
LeVar Burton	5'-7"
Jonah Hill	5'-7"
Zach Galifianakis	5'-7"



The Hobbits in Lord of the Rings include: Martin Freeman (5'-4"), Elijah Wood (5'-4"), and Sean Astin (5'-6") who are all considered small, but they turned that trait into an advantage. Also, J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of The Hobbit, and Lord of the Rings was 5'-5" tall.

* Media mogul Jeffrey Katzenberg is 5'-4"¹ tall.

ATHLETES

Muggsy Bogues

The odds of ever playing in the NBA (even as a talented basketball player) are .03%. How about if you are 5'-3"? That's what makes Muggsy Bogues so incredible—he was a starting guard in the NBA for much of his 14-year career.

Despite the struggles of growing up in inner-city Baltimore, Tyrone (his real name) dreamed of being a dental technician. He led his high school team to a 29-0 record, excelled at Wake Forest, and was drafted in the 1st round.

Don't let others limit your dreams.



As a point guard, Muggsy made the most of his 5'-3" / 136 pound frame by leading his teams in assists and steals. Don't dwell on what you don't have, instead make the most of what you do have.

* Buggsy appeared in the basketball movie, Space Jams.

ATHLETES

Eric Bieniemy

After a stellar college career, running back Eric Bieneimy (5'-7") was drafted by the Chargers in the 2nd round and went on to also play for the Bengals and Eagles in his nine-year NFL career.

After his playing days were over, Eric worked his way up the coaching ranks from high school to college and eventually the NFL—always as an assistant coach.

Bieniemy has interviewed for 16 head coaching positions with 15 different teams. Instead of complaining, he took a job as an assistant head coach and coordinator with the Commanders.



Many of the best NFL running backs in history used their low center of gravity as an advantage including: Barry Sanders, Emmitt Smith, and Walter Payton.

* Eric Bieniemy makes more than a million dollars a year.

ATHLETES

Freddie Patek

At 5'-4" making it to the big leagues would seem impossible. Freddie Patek defied the odds by becoming the Royals starting shortstop for most of his 14 year MLB career and was selected as an All Star three times.

When asked what it was like to be the smallest player in the major leagues, Patek replied, "I'd rather be the smallest player in the majors than the tallest player in the minors."

If you have talent, work hard, and don't let others put limits on you, size doesn't matter. Patek made the most of his speed and his defensive abilities.



Yankees great Phil Rizzuto (5'-6") was named the American League's Most Valuable Player and voted into the MLB Hall of Fame. After his playing days, Rizzuto was the voice of the Yankees for 40 years.

* Freddie Patek is a member of the Royals Hall of Fame.

BONUS LIST

Athletes

In many sports average height is often considered short.

Jerard Holliday	5'-6"
Jose Altuve	5'-6"
David Eckstein	5'-6"
Deonte Harty	5'-6"
Jacquizz Rodgers	5'-6"
Darren Sproles	5'-6"
JJ Taylor	5'-6"
Maurice Jones-Drew	5'-7"
Clyde Edwards Helaire	5'-7"
Marcus Stroman	5'-7"
Spud Webb	5'-7"
Lionel Messi	5'-7"



Doug Flutie is perhaps the most famous undersized NFL quarterback of all time, but Drew Brees, Russell Wilson, and Kyler Murray have all put up even bigger numbers. Before Flutie, Eddie LaBaron (5'-7") was a war hero who played 11 seasons as QB for the Redskins and Cowboys. After retiring, LaBaron became the Atlanta Falcons Executive Vice President.

* Orioles manager Earl Weaver (5'-6") is in the Hall of Fame.

BONUS LIST

Others

Listed below are 5'-7" and under writers, artists, designers, and more.

Andrew Carnegie	5'-2"
Truman Capote	5'-3"
Pablo Picasso	5'-4"
Jeremy Butler	5'-5"
William Faulkner	5'-5"
H.G. Wells	5'-5"
Ralph Lauren	5'6"
Jon Stewart	5'-6"
Steve Wozniak	5'-6"
Jeff Bezos	5'-7"
Albert Einstein	5'-7"
Mark Zuckerberg	5'-7"



Stephen Spielberg stands 5'-7" as does George Lucas. Other directors include: Martin Scorsese (5'-3"), Mel Brooks (5'-4"), and Spike Lee (5'-5")

* Martin Luther King was 5'-6" tall.

THE LAST WORD

Lee Silber

I wrote this mini book for anyone who needed a boost to their morale because they weren't as tall as maybe they wished they were.

I also wrote it for my son, Ethan. He's playing football for Cal Lutheran University after excelling as a high school quarterback. I'm so proud of him because he doesn't let his size determine what he can or can't do.

As for me, I found this project inspiring and it reminded me we can measure height, but we can't measure heart—and the people included here all have heart and exceeded expectations.



Ethan Silber's high school football stats senior year: 2,614 yards passing, 522 yards rushing, 37 touchdowns—all of which lead to Ethan being voted his team's MVP and being chosen to play for USA in Italy.

¹
* Lee Silber (5'-6") is the award winning author of 25 books.

LEE SILBER

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