



Robert Pershing Wadlow - Alton's favorite son

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - The past month or so I have been besieged with requests to talk about Robert Wadlow because of my book "Boy Giant."

"Boy Giant" was released in October 2003. Those who know me, know I shy away from attention, but I felt it necessary to speak about Robert from what I learned in my many interviews.

I feel "Boy Giant" was done just at the right time. If I had waited much longer, many of the people in the book would have been gone.

My story idea to do the Wadlow book came in a dream. I guess it must have been something I was supposed to accomplish, especially because when I first moved to Alton in 1996, I lived directly across the street from where Robert last lived on Sanford Avenue. That was where I had the dream or vision in the middle of the night to do the book. I started writing notes that night and when his baby brother, Harold Jr. said he would be a source, I was in to do the book.

I have to thank one person who is no longer with us for being a huge inspiration to record this part of history and that was Charlene Gill, one of the founders of the Alton Museum of History and Art. Without Charlene's encouragement and help, I doubt if I would have written the book. She was such a bright woman and her legacy now lives on at the museum and within the wonderful museum Robert Wadlow exhibit. I have donated a considerable amount of the Boy Giant proceeds to the museum and of the things I have done in my life, that ranks high on the charts.

The key source of the whole book - Harold Wadlow Jr. - unfortunately, died right before the book was published, which still makes me sad. My dad, Bob, was an ardent reader, but he, too, never saw the finished book product.

What did I learn about the world's tallest man from his brother and so many who knew him?

Mostly, I feel Robert was a shining star for those who suffer from disabilities. He had a terrible time walking as he aged, and it even caused him to drop out of school at Shurtleff College in Alton. It wasn't the curriculum that got Robert, but the walk around campus.

He handled people gawking at him constantly with grace and kindness. One of his classmates said it best, "I think that Robert learned more from observing people than they did him."

Robert was an intelligent man, he had an IQ of 115-plus and he made good grades in school. In the radio interviews of him I heard, he was extremely intelligent.

Robert loved his mom, dad, brothers, and sister. He tried to help his family with the Great Depression by touring around the country. He was able to see much of the U.S. in those travels, but there was one place he always wanted to return to and that was Alton, Illinois.

I am glad Robert Wadlow has received so much attention on his 100th birthday. I hope he is never forgotten.

I hope 100 years from now, Robert's legend will live on.

Tonight, with my family we will have a cake on the table and celebrate his birthday like many others in the Alton area. Happy 100th birthday, Robert! I honestly believe Robert Wadlow will always be Alton's favorite son.

Boy Giant



**The Story Of Robert Wadlow
The World's Tallest Man**

by Dan Brannan

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