

# 17-year-old already at high height, five inches shy of Gentle Giant

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CANILLO, ANDORRA – A young man in Andorra is possibly on his way to meeting Robert Wadlow's record as the tallest person ever to have proven to have existed.

Liam Andreu is currently eight and a half feet tall, around five inches short of Wadlow's height of eight feet 11 inches at the time of his death at the age of 22. Andreu, however, is 17 years old. To celebrate his birthday, Andreu wishes to go to Marseilles where a team of French and Swiss specialists will remove an out-of-control tumor situated on his pituitary gland in a fashion nearly identical to the exceedingly-rare conditions required for Wadlow's enormous growth spurt, which lasted nearly his entire life.

Without that surgery, Andreu may well suffer a similar fate to Wadlow's, who died from complications of his height when added to an infected blister he incurred while marching in a Michigan parade. Unlike Wadlow, however, Andreu tries to keep to his village of 4,800 people.

Before making that decision, Andreu's mother, Emma Andreu, said she has received pressure and letters from across the globe encouraging her son to make the risky and unnecessary decision to continue to grow in an effort to take something from the United States.

“I know why they feel like that,” she said. “Andorra is a very small country, and even though we're in Europe, no one in America seems to know who we are. We have a literacy rate of 100 percent, and our infant mortality rates are much lower than the United States, but still they are known as the greatest country in the world, despite only really leading the world in military spending, prison populations and deaths by reptiles. Still, it's hard not to root for the red, white and blue no matter where you're from.”

Cost of the surgery is estimated to be around \$65,000 despite Andorra having progressive public health policies and some of the best hospitals in Europe. Emma Andreu said most of the village has come together with portions of their savings to help the young man, including Bishop Simon Bordeaux, who is unsure of the origins of the young man's height.

“They say it's because he has a tumor on his pituitary gland, but I suspect it is something much more, supernatural,” Bordeaux said. “I believe the boy is a descendant of one of the Watchers discussed in the Book of Enoch.”

The Book of Enoch is a non-canonical text attributed to ancient Hebrew mystical texts describing a man named Enoch encountering fallen angels banished to Earth. The descendants of those beings were said to have produced a race of giants, known as “the nephilim.” Among the nephilim is said to be the Philistine warrior, Goliath.

Emma Andreu, and much of the rest of Andorra, said that sentiment is laughable. When asked about the bishop's claim, she began cackling hysterically and had to catch her breath before accusing Bordeaux of not even being a bishop.

“They kicked him out of church for believing such fantastic things,” she said. “It would almost be funny if it didn't hurt my poor, gentle son's feelings.”

Like Wadlow, Liam Andreu is described as a gentle giant, often enjoying times in Andorra's Pyrenees foothills sprawling between France and Spain, where his favorite hobbies include picking flowers and reading books about swans – his favorite animal.

“I haven't heard much about Alton where the other tallest man is from,” he said. “But, I hear it has a lot of swans sometimes. I would love to come and visit, assuming everyone isn't mad at me for breaking that record of his if I do.”

If the surgery does happen, it cannot occur until November of this year at the earliest. If Liam Andreu's current growth spurt continues at its chosen pace, he may feasibly take Wadlow's record by then.