

May Around May Around

SAT Testing Under Fire

By Joan M. Smith

In an Atlantic Monthly article, (Feb., 1980), "How Fair are College Boards," author James Fallows mentioned a friend who revealed how crushed he had been when back in high school he only scored in the mid-300s on his Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Despite the setback, however, he managed to attend college on his swimming skills and is now a noted analyst and writer.

This feeling of failure engendered by the emphasis put on the barrage of selective tests has been increasing over the years. Fallows went on to write that he hasn't met a high school student who doesn't take the tests as a measure of how "smart" he is, and that the SAT test has become a peer measuring device. This, along with the fact that the college boards are a powerhouse in determining a student's future educational opportunities has surrounded with controversy the PSAT, SAT, Graduate Record Exam (GRE), and dozens of smaller examinations, and the organization that writes, scores and controls most of them — the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey (ETS).

Educators, social organizations, and students are questioning the fairness of such exams; do they identify the "best and brightest," or merely the expensively educated? are they a true measure of individual student capabilities?

At the National Conference on Testing held in Washington, D.C., last November, the ETS came up against heavy criticism. James Loewen, sociologist from Catholic University Center of National Policy Review commented, "Standardized tests are the greatest single barrier to equal opportunity."

Gerda Steele of the NAACP explained that the SATs were being used from the cradle to the grave, "to select, reject, stratify, classify and sort people."

Terry Herndon, executive director of the National Education Association, zeroed in on the fact that ninety

million lives have been affected by the data collected by ETS and that the organization is "unaccountable to the political, educational, and legal communities."

ETS, of course, is not standing still for such criticism. It has been in existence for over 30 years and its members take pride in their contributions to the American educational system. William Angoff, ETS vice president, who was raised in Boston tenements, and who through family support attended Boston Latin School and Harvard, and then made a career in psychometrics, considers the tests a friend of American society at all levels.

"It (SAT) certainly has been a boon to people like me. It picks out people because of their individual likelihood to succeed."

It is the oldest of these tests, (the SAT), that ETS takes special pride in. It was first administered in 1926. Before then, all college boards had been essay tests, but after that first SAT the essay exam and multiple-choice SAT coexisted until World War II when the essay test was dropped.

The testing battle is a complex one and promises to be a long one. New arguments have arisen involving test-coaching feasibility, and the fact that ETS has made ac-

cusations of student cheating in cases where a retaken test has produced a greater score increase. Also, New York State's "truth in testing" legislation, allowing students to receive corrected answer sheets and complete text booklets a few months after taking the test is none too popular with the pro-testers. And while this controversy goes on, students and their educational futures hang in the balance. They are, however, aware of an important factor: the pressures of the tests, along with the knowledge that the score result greatly controls their educational aspirations, can make even the "best and brightest" choke on the exam.



Dad's Night

Junior Colleen Jones and her sister Kathy, a freshman, enjoy St. Agnes' recent father-daughter dinner dance with their father Wynn Jones. The event was sponsored by the Student Senate.

Wittman Attends Seminar

Susan Wittman, a student at Cardinal Mooney, participated in the New York State Leadership Seminar in conjunction with the Hugh O'Brian Youth Foundation, held at Grand Island. Sixty-three students attended to explore and understand America's Incentive System.



SUSAN WITTMAN
youthful energy. Seminars are being held in 39 states this year.

Each year since 1958, the Foundation has sponsored a series of International Youth Leadership Seminars, selecting two high school sophomores, a boy and girl, from each state, who show leadership abilities. They learn to utilize their capabilities for leadership by sharing with their community their knowledge, enthusiasm and

Mercy Award Winners

Our Lady of Mercy High School announced scholarship awards to the incoming freshman class. Maria Gerace of Bay Trail Middle School and Holy Spirit parish is the recipient of the William J. Stolze Scholarship. Maria will receive \$400 a year for each of her years at Mercy.

Other winners are: Katherine Cobb, St. Joseph, Assumption parish; Karen Paul, St. Jerome; Stephanie Foote, Bay Trail, St. Joseph parish; Patricia Cahill, Our Lady of Lourdes; Peggy Fuller, St. Anne, Lutheran

Church of Good Shepherd; Karen Gramza, Our Lady of Perpetual Help; Mary Jo Kennelly, St. Rita; Karen Paradies, St. Louis; Jennifer Roberts, Johanna, Perrin School, Assumption parish.

The Harry C. Walsh Memorial Scholarship Award went to Ellen Shields, Bloomfield Central, St. Mary's parish, Canandaigua. Alumnae scholarships went to Kimberly Manigan, St. Ambrose, and Eileen McMahon, Our Lady of Good Council.



Photo: By Terrance J. Brennan

Art Watchers

Freshmen Donna Catone and Kathy Buckley take a breather from classes to survey the artwork submitted by BK students for the school's annual Spring Art Show.

Equal Time

What about the SAT tests? Are they necessary?

OUR LADY OF MERCY

NANCY CASWELL
Junior
drama club

"I suppose the tests are necessary but there has to be a better alternative to them because they don't reflect your individual achievements, they tend to symbolize income status. I think a nationwide regents tests. The colleges have to have something to go on."



PAM COURNA
Sophomore
swimming

"I think there should be alternate tests. They put too much emphasis on them, especially for getting into college. I think basically looking at an individual's record for all the high school years would show more about a student's capabilities, rather than a SAT test that only takes three hours."



SUSAN D'AGOSTINO
Junior
cheerleader

"I don't think they are a fair way to decide if a student is to be accepted in a college. The test is really hard and it's not good to have the pressure. It is not a good way to decide if you are a good student or not. A nationwide regents test would be fairer because of the different levels of educational opportunities of people."



LYNN GAUTHIER
Sophomore
varsity basketball

"I think they are unfair. I don't think one test should reflect a student's capabilities. It should be based on individual tests. A lot of kids get scared and perhaps won't do well on the SAT. A lot of kids are good students but choke under test pressure. A national regents test, geared to every class of people wouldn't be so biased."



ANNE GEHAN
Sophomore
soccer

"I think they're fair for the colleges because it is difficult for them because they want the academic achievers, especially the competitive campuses, but they are unfair to the student who has to take them. They may have done well in the four years of high school and then because of the pressure they could blow it, and that would mean not getting into the school they want. But I don't see an alternative because there has to be a nationwide testing program of some kind."



COLLEEN McCALLUM
Sophomore
horsebackriding

"I think that they're good — colleges need the results. If you can't do well on the SAT how would you do in college especially if you want to be a professional like a doctor, or lawyer? I think the students taking the Standardized tests should remember that it's not the only thing the colleges look at, and they should try to do well all through high school for good marks so that they have an overall good record."



MAUREEN BYRNE
Sophomore
swimming

"I think they are good but they put too much pressure on the student. I think colleges put too much emphasis on the SAT and it's not fair to people who don't do well on the tests because of the pressure. I'm scared to take them. I think colleges should look more at the overall high-school years and average things out rather than have the SAT the basis."



MARY BETH MADIGAN
Junior

"They are unfair and they're discriminatory against low income people because they don't have the opportunities for being exposed to what is on the tests. Also there is no way you can study for the test. Colleges should look at individual records, or maybe there should be something like a national regents exam."

