Tests, and How They Grew

Just the other night I was saying to the little woman, "Do you think the importance of tests in American colleges is being overemphasized?" (Incidentally, the little woman is not, as you might think, my wife. My wife is far from a little woman. She is, in fact, nearly seven feet high and manly in bearing. She is a full-blooded Ogallala Sioux and holds the world's shot put record. The little woman I referred to is someone we found crouching under the sofa when we moved into our apartment back in 1928, and there she has remained ever since. She never speaks except to make a kind of noise that striking sounds when she is hungry. To tell you the truth, she's not too much fun to have around the house, but with my wife away at track meets most of the time, at least it gives me someone to talk to.)

But I digress. "Do you think the importance of tests in American colleges is being overemphasized?" I said the other night to the little woman, and then I said, "Yes, Max, I do think the importance of tests in American colleges is being overemphasized." (As I explained, the little woman does not speak, so when we have conversations, I am the one who tells her what I want to tell her.)

But I digress. To get back to tests—sure, they're important, and all that. There are, after all, many talents which simply can't be measured by quizzes. Is it right to penalize a gifted student whose gifts don't happen to fall into an academic category? Like, for instance, Finster Sigafous?

Finster, a freshman at the Wyoming College of Belles Lettres and Fingerprint Identification, has never passed a single course. He is a charmer of Finster's, had no talent, no gifts, no brains, no personality. All he had was a knack for telephone phone calls. He could build a rudimentary telephone out of 100 yards of string and two empty Personna Blades. (This last accomplishment is the one Finster is proudest of—not building United Airlines.)

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