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CIA chalk talk fails to spark Glencoe teen

By Thomas J. Dolan

The Central Intelligence Agency is going to have to show more than edible paper and fluorescent chalk if it wants to impress David Breskin, a senior at New Trier West High School.

Breskin, 17, and 349 other high school students were granted a visit and briefing last week at CIA headquarters, in MacLean, Va., near Washington. It was a big hit with most of them, he said.

"They whisked us in, on buses with police escorts one night," Breskin said. "We got the whole bit."

The students, from all parts of the country, received a 2½-hour briefing in the intelligence agency's bubble-shaped auditorium as part of a week of studying the national government. The week was sponsored by the Presidential Classroom for Young Americans, an Arlington (Va.) private educational organization.

Breskin, who lives in Glencoe, said he was impressed with the ability and honesty of the CIA briefing officer, Paul Chretien, but gave Chretien low marks on the show-and-tell part of the briefing and on male chauvinism.

"He started out telling us that we should forget all that James Bondian stuff about the CIA," Breskin said. "And then he snapped his fingers and a huge screen came out of the floor.

"Later he turned the lights down and showed us that the chalk he was using glowed in the dark. He was pretty proud of it and it impressed the kids from Ohio, but I didn't get too



CIA bubble burst

Using an aerial photo of the CIA complex in MacLean, Va., David Breskin, 17, locates the bubble-shaped auditorium where touring students were briefed. Forget the CIA's James Bond image, the students were told. (Sun-Times Photo by Duane Hall)

excited."

Later, Breskin said, Chretien chewed up some edible paper to demonstrate its properties and passed out some samples. Breskin did not have a taste, however.

Most of Breskin's companions were "from places like Shelby, N.C. There did not seem to be any big-city kids in the group. In general, the kids were really impressed and they asked a lot of questions."

During the questioning, which followed a film on the Cuban missile crisis, Breskin and Chretien seemed well-prepared. He was prepared for the questions about the CIA's press image and bad publicity it has received, Breskin said.

But Chretien's reply did not sit well with Breskin when an attractive girl asked how to

become a spy. "He answered that she had some very fine assets and that any time she wanted to join she could just talk to him," Breskin recalled.

After the talk, Breskin said Chretien followed the group to its Washington hotel and led a discussion on the role of intelligence in foreign policy.

A CIA spokesman said the agency has been briefing students from the Presidential Classroom for about three years as part of their week. "We're just one of the stops," he added. The spokesman said the CIA does not sponsor the week in any other way.

"We're very proud of the fact that our briefing officer (Chretien) is something of a hit," the spokesman said. "He does a lovely thing with edible paper."