A HIDDEN COLLEGE TREASURE

The experience FBI Director Robert Mueller had two weeks ago when he tried to give a speech at Harvard seems typical of many colleges campuses these days.

"Mueller, who was set to speak before a full crowd managed by tight security detail, had just begun his prepared remarks when the first protestor interrupted with screams," reported the Harvard Crimson.

Yet recently I went to a college campus to hear a controversial speaker on a hot button topic in a lecture hall packed with students. The speaker (my friend Ralph Peters) had no security, and needed none.

No attempt was made to disrupt his remarks. The questions the students asked were polite, respectful, and intelligent, indicating both a familiarity with the topic and a desire to learn more about it.

Obviously, I wasn't at Harvard - or, say, at Columbia, where the administration let off with wrist slaps students who physically assaulted a speaker last semester.

I was instead at Grove City College.

Grove City College is a small school (2,450 in the student body) located in a bucolic community about 60 miles north of Pittsburgh. It is loosely affiliated with the Presbyterian Church.

There are more than three reasons why you should consider sending your son or daughter to Grove City, but these are the most important:

**Your child will be safe*. College should be safe, but is becoming less so. In 2005, the most recent year for which the Department of Education has compiled statistics, there were 11 murders, 2,857 aggravated assaults, and 2,697 "forcible sex offenses" at American colleges and universities.

At the University of Pittsburgh that year, there were 5 rapes, 2 aggravated assaults, and 45 burglaries. At Penn State's University Park campus, there were 9 rapes, 6 aggravated assaults, and 45 burglaries. At the University of Pennsylvania, there were 3 rapes, 5 aggravated assaults and 33 burglaries.

There were 5 burglaries at Grove City in 2005. The last rape there was in 1993. There is no record of a murder or an aggravated assault ever having taken place on campus.

Penn State and Pitt have much larger student bodies, and Pitt and Penn are located in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, where the crime rate is much higher than it is in rural Pennsylvania. But at

Dartmouth (4,100 undergraduates) in bucolic Hanover, New Hampshire, there were 14 rapes and 34 burglaries in 2005. Clearly, there is a dynamic at Grove City that isn't present at most other schools.

* *Your child will receive a first rate education*. In the U.S. News & World Report rankings for 2007, Grove City ranked 7th (of 34) in its category (Comprehensive Colleges, North).

The U.S. News rankings are based on statistical data such as the SAT/ACT scores of entering freshmen. (The average SAT score for last year's freshman class was 1279, slightly higher than for Pitt or Penn State, much higher than the national average of 1021.)

What impresses me about Grove City is that students there actually learn facts, learn them in context, and practice critical thinking. *There's no political correctness*. At Grove City, the faculty thinks it is more important for students to learn how to think than to be told what to think.

This is rare at public schools. My daughter attended the University of Colorado. She took a geography course her freshman year. In that course she and her classmates learned that white people are responsible for every bad thing that's ever happened in Rwanda.

But at the end of the course, many still couldn't find Rwanda on a map. And this was a geography course.

* *Grove City ranked first, for the fifth year in a row, in the "best value" category in U.S. News' college rankings*. According to the Princeton Review, the average cost to attend a public college or university for four years is $48,500. For private schools, its $116,000.

At Grove City, full time students this school year are paying $16,728 for tuition, room and board.

The event that brought me to Grove City, the annual seminar of its Center for Vision and Values, is another reason for loving the college. The Center is run by Dr. Paul Kengor, a rising young star in academia who has written a well received biography of President Reagan, The Crusader.

This year's seminar was on the "De-Christianization of Europe." It featured scholars from Britain, France and Belgium as well as the U.S. There just aren't many places in America anymore where you can hear an amicable discussion of an important topic by genuine experts with widely differing points of view.

In a national survey of high school guidance counselors, Kaplan Publishing described Grove City College as a "hidden treasure." It's a treasure which should be hidden no longer.