



Andrea Johnson/MDN

The BUS-eum shows artifacts from American prisoners of war held at POW camps in Germany during World War II.

## Traveling artifacts museum educating students at MHS

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A traveling museum exhibit is educating students about the experiences of prisoners of war during World War II.

German prisoners of war were treated mostly fairly and humanely by the United States, said Michael Luick-Thrams, executive director of TRACES in St. Paul, Minn. American prisoners of war in Germany were treated a bit better than Soviet, French or British prisoners of war, but were still so hungry that by the end of the war they were eating grass soup and killing rats they caught in barns.

Luick-Thrams, who spoke to students at Minot High School-Magic City Campus on Friday, said the majority of the former German POWs he's interviewed are friendly toward the United States and feel they were treated well. All of the American POWs he interviewed were so traumatized by their experiences that they hate Germany and anything associated with it to this day. The lesson Luick-Thrams hopes to impart is that the way a country treats prisoners will



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have an impact on the way they relate to that country for decades after a war.

"Treat them like scum and they're going to resent it for the rest of their lives," said Luick-Thrams, but treat them fairly and humanely and they will have a favorable opinion of the United States. He told the students that the exhibit has relevance to their daily lives at a time when the United States is engaged in the war on terror.

Magic City Campus history teacher Gary Wenstad, a veteran of the war in Iraq, said he felt a kinship with the

American POWs whose story is told in the traveling exhibit, called the BUS-eum. Most of his students know someone who is serving overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan, he said, and a few of the seniors have joined the National Guard and will probably be shipped to the region to serve.

Junior Evan Brandt said he was impressed by the exhibit. A lot of World War II presentations tend to be about the fate of Jews held in concentration camps in Germany, said Brandt, but the stories of the POWs were ones with which

he was less familiar.

Brandt said the presentation does make him think a bit about the current war in Iraq. He doesn't know much about Guantanamo Bay, the detention camp where detainees accused of being Qaeda and Taliban operatives are being held. There isn't a lot of information in the press about Guantanamo Bay, said Brandt, who said maybe he should think more about it.

"I hope we're treating them better than the Germans treated the American prisoners of war," said Brandt. He said he's sure the American government is doing so.

Both Brandt and juniors James Owens and Jennifer Schlak said the displays in the BUS-eum are interesting and informative.

The BUS-eum exhibit, housed in a converted school bus, will be parked at the Minot Public Library today from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. It's free and open to the public.

The BUS-eum will also stop in Bottineau, Rugby, Devils Lake, and Carrington during the coming days.

The bus contains

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information, artifacts and rare photographs documenting the experiences of American POWs from the Iowa-based 34th "Red Bull" division. About 2,000 men, mostly from Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota, were captured by the Nazis in North Africa in 1943 and shipped to Germany, where they were held for the duration of the war. At first the American POWs had access to entertainment, much like German POWs who were held in locations all over the United States, including Algona Detention Camp in Iowa. Later, as conditions deteriorated in Germany, the American POW were treated worse. Luick-Thrams said

write about after the war, what job or career they might have," said Luick-Thrams. He said those are universal themes.

He hopes people will learn from the BUS-eum and apply what they've learned to the situations people encounter today.

the Germans were treated according to the standards of the Geneva Convention. They had good food, medical care, opportunities to work at farms or factories in the area, and were able to draw, paint, write, put on plays or form bands. Diaries written by both the American POWs and the German POWs are similar, said Luick-Thrams.

"They write about their mothers, their girlfriends, they