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"All told, at this point, we have a working figure for our seven-volume encyclopedia of 42,500 sites that we're trying to document and describe," he said.

Megargee visited the University of South Dakota Tuesday night to discuss the various types of camps and their purposes as part of the Herbert S. Schell Annual Lecture in History.

Megargee has spent more than a decade at the Holocaust museum, where he serves as a senior applied research scholar with the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies.

His primary role is to serve as the general editor for the museum's seven-volume "Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945."

"Concentration camp" has become a catch-all term for what was a variety of different camps, from ghettos and "Germanization" camps to forced labor camps and, ultimately, killing centers.

With the sheer number of camps throughout Europe, Megargee said the argument that the Germans didn't know

about them doesn't hold water.

"The concentration camps were public knowledge from the start because the regime publicized them," he said. "They were in the papers, they were on the radio, reporters went into them and reported on conditions. They were shown a sanitized version of what was going on – and we're not talking about genocide, because that hadn't even started yet – but just the very rough treatment that went on in the camps."

The Nazis wanted people to know about the concentration camps as a deterrent measure, he said.

"If you were bad, you were going to get sent to a concentration camp, so there was no sense in keeping them a secret," he said.

Additionally, virtually all types of businesses were using inmates of forced labor camps as slaves by the end of the war.

"There's absolutely no way that any German could say they didn't know about the presence of these people. Every butcher, baker, candlestick-maker, small factory, large factory, mine, railroad station, hospital, farm, they were all using forced laborers," said Megargee. "You could not go anywhere in Germany without running into

people who were being held against their will and forced to work, so the idea that someone would be unaware of that is nonsense."

When people say the Germans didn't know, Megargee suspects they are referring to the killing centers, because unlike the concentration camps, the Nazis wanted them to be kept secret.

"The Nazi regime did not want people knowing about them because this was such a radical measure," he said. "But, there were so many people involved in this process – railroad managers, bureaucrats throughout the Nazi government. Lots of people knew exactly what was going on, so word got out."

An example of this can be found in the diaries of Victor Klemperer, a Jewish man who avoided deportation through most of the war because his wife was not Jewish.

By March 1942, Klemperer's diary already contains a reference to Auschwitz.

"He knew that this was a place where Jews were sent and killed in large numbers," Megargee said. "He didn't know how, he didn't know what was involved, but he knew that this was a death sentence. This is only a few months after the

place started operating.

"If you didn't want to close your ears to it, if you didn't dismiss it as Allied propaganda, the information was there. So people knew. They knew something. They knew that terrible things were happening inside of the camps."

Senior figures in the US government also knew "fairly early," Megargee said.

"There was a hesitation about making too much of this because the Nazis were accusing the Western Allies and the Soviets of fighting on behalf of the Jews, and this was a part of the overall Jewish conspiracy," he said. "They didn't want to encourage that. You pair that with a lot of strong anti-Semitism in American society ... and it all ended up sort of muddling the picture."

That picture is still being cleared up today, thanks to the work of researchers who have pored over millions of camp-related documents that were seized after the war.

"We're able to put together a fairly complete picture, at least with the broad numbers of camps, with their purposes, their locations," Megargee said. "We don't always have a detailed picture of what life was like in each individual camp or every event that



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occurred in each place, but in general terms we have a pretty good idea from these millions of pages of documentation."

The sheer volume of documentation of the Nazis' crimes flies in the face of claims made by Holocaust-deniers, Megargee said.

"I don't have a lot of time to spend on the serious deniers," he said. "We get questions from people who honestly don't know and want to find out, and of course we'll help them. I don't spend time arguing with deniers because they're not interested in reason."

VERMILLION POLICE DEPARTMENT CALLS

10/27/13 01:45 – Vehicle was stopped for erratic driving and equipment violations. Driver was found to be intoxicated and was arrested for DUI. Driver was also found to have a revoked license and active warrants for his arrest.

10/27/13 01:46 – Officers responded to a report of a highly intoxicated person. Investigation revealed the person had recently turned 21 and had been binge drinking in celebration. It was determined the person needed medical help and was transported by ambulance. Under Investigation.

10/27/13 02:03 – Officers responded to a 911 hang-up call. The call was accidental.

10/27/13 11:12 – A set of glasses found at the courthouse was turned over to police.

10/27/13 14:38 – Caller reported dogs running at large in the neighborhood. Responding officers found the owner out recapturing the dogs in question.

10/27/13 16:21 – Caller reported a fraudulent use of his credit card. Further investigation revealed the charges had not been fraudulent but a misunderstanding had

occurred. No crime occurred.

10/28/13 16:27 – 15 Pounds of unwanted prescription drugs were turned over to police as part of the National DEA Drug Take Back program. These drugs were turned over to the DEA.

10/30/13 19:31 – Subject reported an ongoing harassment situation involving an ex-wife.

10/30/13 20:26 – Caller asked police to contact his mother whose car had broken down to ensure she was safe until he could arrive. Officers found the woman and worked with her to find a safe dry place for her to wait for her son.

10/30/13 21:12 – Caller reported loud music from

a neighbor home. Officers responded and found unreasonable loud music coming from the home. When asked the homeowner turned the music down.

10/31/13 01:55 – Officers responded to a domestic dispute in progress. Investigation revealed the suspect had attempted to choke the victim who had fled their apartment to escape. The suspect was arrested for aggravated assault.

10/31/13 03:52 – Caller reported a roommate had made suicidal threat. Officers interviewed the involved parties and based on the information took the roommate into protective custody for a

mental evaluation.

10/31/13 07:49 – Officers responded to a report of a trailer fire and provided medical care for the sole occupant until fire and ambulance units arrived.

11/01/13 03:30 – Caller reported a fight downtown. Investigation revealed a man got upset at his girlfriend for wearing a coat belonging to another man. He had ended up shaking his girlfriend and punching another man who tried to stop him. The suspect was arrested for assault.

11/01/13 20:09 – Caller reported an unknown vehicle had driven across

her lawn. Officers were unable to determine a suspect vehicle, but a new apartment complex was being built nearby and the vehicle there seemed likely candidates.

11/02/13 01:24 – Caller reported a possible drug deal going on Main Street.

Officers checked the area but were unable to locate the described vehicle/person.

– For a complete list of Vermillion Police Department calls, visit www.plaintalk.net.

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