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History lecturer documents war's effect on the home front

By Sandy Johnstone
Of the Emerald

"Much of the change in American society is rooted in the impact of war," said history professor Allan Winkler. "America is left very different today than before the wars."

Winkler traced the history of 20th century wars Thursday for about 50 people in a speech at the Eugene Conference Center.

"All of these wars brought a fundamental long-lasting change," he said.

In World War I there was an initial "feeling of hope and optimism that we could bail-out Europe," Winkler said. The optimism was best reinforced by prominent people who agreed war would "forge national unity," he said.

While there was also sub-

stantial opposition from the start, most people were persuaded by the war ideal promoted by war songs and government propaganda, said Winkler.

But national unity also led to actions limiting free speech such as the Alien and Sedition Act and jailing Eugene Debs for making an anti-war speech.

World War I also brought a major economic mobilization and organization which then increased with each subsequent war, he said.

"In the aftermath, people began to be discontented with what they'd done and began to ask if the war was worth it," he said. This led to the neutrality acts of 1935, 1936 and 1937.

Then came World War II.

"World War II was very much like the dinosaur — it was the ultimate development of that particular type of species," said Winkler.

The war managed to get the country out of its economic slump through benefits to business which led to full employment, he said, but at the same time imprisoned the Japanese — "the worst single violation of civil liberties in history."

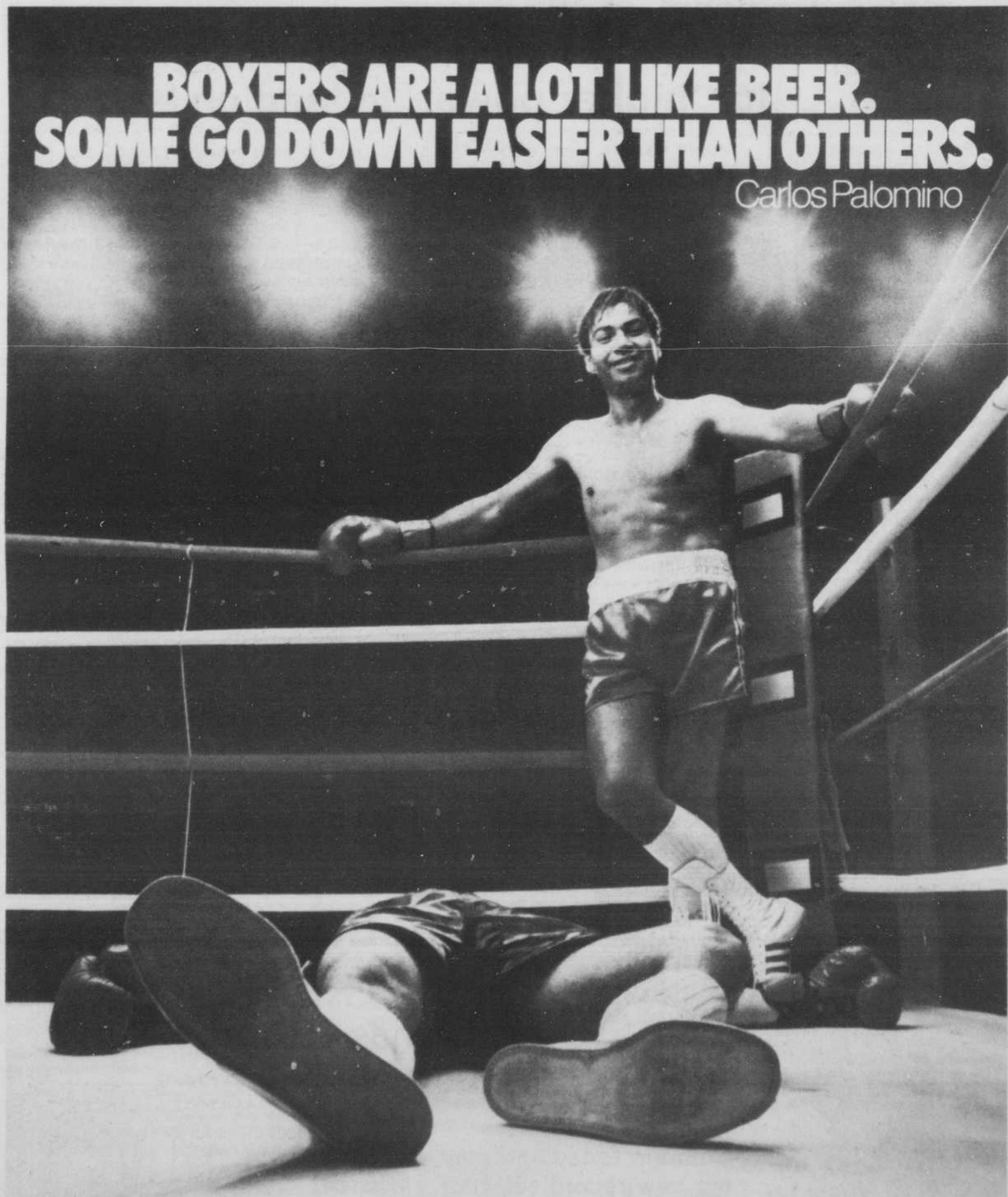
Blacks also suffered discrimination throughout the war. They weren't allowed to join the Marines or Air Force and were segregated in the Army, he said. The Red Cross kept blood from black donors separate from other donors, he noted.

"But the war unified the country again," Winkler said. It also brought about greater organization in the federal government, brought the discontent of blacks to the forefront and put women to work (as much as 36 percent of the domestic labor force).

Then the Korean "police action" brought frustration to the American public because they had to deal with the nuclear threat, said Winkler.

"There was a real frustration in the Korean War because it was a limited war."

"War is by nature not only affecting the soldier and diplomats, but also the home front," he said. "We are left with the growing complexity of war."



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