New book by graduate student Ross Coen on history of Japan's balloon bomb attack on America

Submitted by Arts & Sciences Web Team on October 17, 2014 - 11:09pm

Congratulations to UW History graduate student Ross Coen, whose new book _Fu-Go: The Curious History of Japan's Balloon Bomb Attack on America_ has just be published by University of Nebraska Press.

The timing of Ross’s book is impeccable: earlier this month, one of these Japanese balloons (with intact bomb) was found in rural British Columbia. This was the first discovery anywhere in North America since the 1960s.

Ross’s book is published as part of the “Studies in War, Society, and the Military Series,” edited by Peter Maslowski, David Gra>, and Reina Pennington. Below is the publisher’s description of _Fu-Go_:

Near the end of World War II, in an attempt to attack the United States mainland, Japan launched its fu-go campaign, deploying thousands of high-altitude hydrogen balloons armed with incendiary and high-explosive bombs designed to follow the westerly winds of the upper atmosphere and drift to the west coast of North America. After reaching the mainland, these fu-go, the Japanese hoped, would terrorize American citizens and ignite devastating forest fires across the western states, ultimately causing the United States to divert wartime resources to deal with the domestic crisis. While the fu-go offensive proved to be a complete tactical failure, six Americans lost their lives when a discovered balloon exploded.

Ross Coen provides a fascinating look into the obscure history of the fu-go campaign, from the Japanese schoolgirls who manufactured the balloons by hand to the generals in the U.S. War Department who developed defense procedures. The book delves into panic, propaganda, and media censorship in wartime. Fu-go is a compelling story of a little-known episode in our national history that unfolded virtually unseen.

As a graduate student in the Department of History, Coen specializes in the History of the American West, Environmental History, History of Science and Technology, and U.S. Political History. His previous book, _Breaking Ice for Arctic Oil: The Epic Voyage of the SS Manhattan through the Northwest Passage_ was published by the University of Alaska Press in 2012.
Department of History
University of Washington
318 Smith Box 353560
Seattle, WA 98195-3560

Phone: (206) 543-5790
Fax: (206) 543-9451
histmain@uw.edu