



FIFTY YEARS AGO IN WORLD WAR II

JULY-AUGUST 1943

By July of 1943, America and her Allies had seized the initiative and were increasing the pressure on the Axis powers in all theaters of operations. In the Mediterranean, U.S. forces used newly liberated North Africa as a springboard for the capture of Sicily, while U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine forces swept the Japanese from islands they had captured less than two years earlier. The Russians were no less effective; they stalled and ultimately routed two German Army Groups and began the laborious task of liberating their homeland. Through it all, the heroism of individual soldiers served as inspiration to others engaged in the dirty, often painful, business of war.

These and other highlights of World War II are excerpted from *Bad Hannings: A Portrait of the Stars and Stripes, Volume II* (available for \$50.00 from Sentram Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 432, Glenside, PA 19038).

- 1-3 July** As part of Admiral Nimitz's plan to recapture the Solomon Islands, the 43d U.S. Infantry Division prepares to seize Munda Airfield.
- 5-7 July** The German Army launches its offensive against the Soviet salient of Kursk, with the 9th Army driving south from Orel and the 4th Panzer Army advancing north from Belgorod. After initial success, the offensive is slowed by Russian counterattacks north of Kursk.
- 8 July** American B-24 bombers based on Midway strike Japanese positions on Wake Island in the first attack by land-based planes since the capture of Wake in December 1941. In North Africa, the 82d Airborne Division finalizes plans for the invasion of Sicily.
- 9-11 July** The 3,000-ship U.S.-British invasion fleet approaches Sicily, where Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Seventh Army will land at three locations, while the British Eighth Army lands to the east, on the Pachino Peninsula. Paratroopers of the U.S. 82d Airborne and the British 1st Airborne land, in spite of high winds and navigational errors, and succeed in blocking the Hermann Goering Division's attack to clear the beachhead.
- 17 July** Hitler announces that Operation Zitadelle—the offensive to reduce the Kursk salient—was ended. In this action, the Wehrmacht suffered 120,000 killed and wounded and lost 1,500 tanks; Russian losses were an equal number of tanks and 100,000 killed and wounded.
- 29 July** In the Solomons, the U.S. 37th Infantry Division begins the final offensive against Japanese forces holding Munda Airfield, which is finally retaken on 31 July. On the final day of the action, a platoon of the 148th Infantry is pinned down by machinegun fire until Private Roger Young attacks the enemy position with rifle fire and grenades. Repeatedly wounded, Private Young continues to divert the enemy until his platoon escapes and he is finally cut down. His heroism is recognized in his posthumous award of the Medal of Honor.
- 9 August** During the continued advance across Sicily, the U.S. 1st Division continues to hammer the German 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, while the British Eighth Army concentrates its effort along the east coast. Italian General d'Armata Guzzoni is ordered to evacuate all Italian troops to the mainland. One day later German General Hans Hube orders a German evacuation over the next four nights.
- 15 August** The U.S. Seventh Army races across the northern edge of Sicily enroute to Messina, as the British Eighth Army attempts a similar maneuver in the south, along the east coastal road. The German evacuation from Messina continues at breakneck speed. The Sicilian campaign will end with the arrival of Regimental Combat Team 7, 3rd Infantry Division, in Messina on 17 August 1943.