



FIFTY YEARS AGO IN WORLD WAR II NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1943

In the closing months of 1943, the Axis powers were reeling under the relentless pressure of the Allies. U.S. soldiers, sailors, and Marines were regaining control of territories seized by Japan at the outset of the war, while the Russian counteroffensive was rapidly gaining momentum, halting or repulsing German advances. With the capitulation of Italy's armed forces, Allied commanders could concentrate still more combat power against tenacious German forces defending along the Gustav Line. The mounting list of Allied victories was a tribute to the self-sacrifice, heroism, and patriotism of the fighting men and women of the United States and her Allies.

*These and other highlights of World War II are drawn from Bud Hannings' landmark research text, *A Portrait of the Stars and Stripes, Volume II* (available for \$50.00 from Seniram Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 432, Glenside, PA 19038).*

- 1 November** *The U.S. invasion of Bougainville gets under way, with the First Marine Amphibious Corps hitting the beaches shortly after sunrise. The landings are supported by heavy air and naval bombardment. The Americal Division will replace the Marines in mid-January, and Bougainville will be secured by the end of April 1944.*
- 5 November** *The 3d Ranger Battalion repulses a savage Japanese attack on Bougainville, then joins the 9th Marines to advance on one of the two primary trails on Cape Torokina.*
- 11 November** *During bitter fighting near Mignano, Italy, PFC Floyd K. Lindstrom engages attacking Germans with a machinegun. Though his unit is outnumbered 5 to 1, he charges the enemy, killing two with his .45 pistol. Rapidly changing positions, he captures a German machinegun and ammunition and succeeds in breaking up the enemy's assault. He is later awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously.*
- 20-23 November** *In some of the bloodiest fighting of the war, Army and Marine forces assault Makin and Tarawa Atolls. The 2d Marine Division sustains staggering losses, more than 30 percent in some units, but continues the fight. Heavily reinforced, the Marines secure Tarawa by 23 November, having lost more than 1,100 killed and 2,200 wounded. Only 17 of the 4,500 Japanese defenders survive. The Army's 165th Infantry repels a determined counterattack and presses the offensive, capturing Butaritari Island by 10:30 on the 23d.*
- 8-16 December** *The 36th Infantry Division sustains heavy losses in fighting around San Pietro, Italy, finally capturing the town on 16 December. The 3d Ranger Battalion captures Hill 950, two miles north of San Pietro, in a pounding rainstorm, against heavy resistance.*
- 20 December** *Units of the 36th Infantry Division continue to advance on San Vittore and are halted by stiff German resistance. The 34th Division relieves the 36th on 29 December.*