

FIFTY YEARS AGO IN WORLD WAR II MAY-JUNE 1944

By the spring of 1944, military reverses in the Pacific, in Italy, and across the breadth of the Soviet Union had become a portent of the fate that was to befall the Axis in the coming year. Irreplaceable losses in men and materiel made it impossible to resist for long the ring that was inexorably closing in on Germany and Japan and their dwindling number of allies. The unraveling of codes that both the German and Japanese relied upon enabled Allied intelligence agencies to anticipate enemy operations and to accurately assess the effectiveness of our own military operations. The culmination of Allied efforts in the late spring of 1944 was the landing of more than 150,000 troops at Normandy, on the coast of France. The second front long awaited by the Russians had been opened.

These and other highlights of World War II are drawn from Bud Hannings' excellent book, *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 May** *The Allies in Italy finalize plans for the next offensive to take Rome. A meeting is held at Caserta to work out the details of a massive assault against Cassino, followed by a breakout at Anzio.*
- 9 May** *The Soviet Red Army retakes Sevastopol. In the China-Burma-India theater, Chinese troops, assisted by Merrill's Marauders, push the Japanese from Ritpong.*
- 11 May** *The Allies mount the final offensive to crush resistance on the Gustav Line and take Cassino and Rome. During the attack, First Lieutenant Robert T. Waugh, 339th Infantry, 85th Division, advances against an enemy-held hill near Tremensuoli. The platoon opens up with cover fire as Waugh assaults and destroys six enemy bunkers, capturing or killing all defenders. He is killed later at Itri, Italy, and is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.*
- 16 May** *In the U.S. Fifth Army area, the German 94th Division is in full retreat, with the 85th and 88th U.S. Divisions in pursuit.*
- 3 June** *During the Battle for Rome, an American patrol comes under fire from the Germans near Vaumont. Private Herbert F. Christian draws fire from 60 riflemen, three machineguns, and three tanks. His left leg is shot off, but he continues to stagger toward the German position, firing the last round from his sub-machinegun. Enemy fire kills him, but his sacrifice allows his squad to escape. He is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.*
- 6 June** *More than 5,000 ships carry more than 150,000 men ashore at Normandy, while three Allied airborne divisions land behind the enemy-held coast during the pre-dawn hours, beginning Operation OVERLORD.*

