WILLIAM ROBINSON BLAIR, III
1938

William Blair entered the School in 1933 and was there three years. As a Fourth Former, already a boy of unusual size and strength, he played on the Ithman football team and was chosen for the School Team. Leaving St. Paul’s in his Fourth Form year, he went to the Hun School in Princeton, N. J., from which he graduated in June, 1937. He was then employed by the National Supply Company of Pittsburgh and spent the next four years in the oil fields of Oklahoma and Texas. In April, 1942, he resigned from the company to enlist in the U.S.A.A.F. An Aviation Cadet, he was stationed first at Montgomery, Alabama. Transferred to Bennettsville, South Carolina, he was instantly killed there in a plane crash on October 6, 1942, the day he was to have completed his preliminary flying training.

WILLIAM TEMPLE EMMET, 2ND
1938

William Temple Emmet, 2nd, entered St. Paul’s a Second Former in 1933. He was thinner and lighter, when he came, as well as younger, than the average of his Form, and he was handicapped for a couple of years by a ruptured leg muscle which eventually required an operation. He rowed Bow on the second Haleyon crew in 1937 and the following year was No. 3 on the first and also on the S.P.S. By that time he was six feet one and his development in other ways had kept pace with his physical growth. Although he was not yet eighteen when he graduated, the willfulness and obstinacy of his childhood had turned into the independence and strength of which they were forerunners. He was already at seventeen an extremely intelligent person, with a keen sense of humor, uncompetitive, disinclined to exert himself strenuously in his own behalf, but growing in self-confidence and in the tact and charm which so well expressed his warm interest in people, his deep and understanding friendliness.

At Harvard, where he studied harder than he had at St. Paul’s, he was twice on the Dean’s List. He was on his Freshman swimming team and crew squad. In the Summer of 1940, he went on the V-7 cruise but was honorably discharged from the Navy the following year, having, in an automobile accident received injuries that partly paralyzed two fingers of his right hand. Graduated from college in January, 1942, he began the Quartermaster Course at the Harvard Business School, but resigned to enlist in the Air Corps. He received his wings in May, 1944, and went to England the following January as pilot of a B-17.
Emmet's first combat mission, February 14, to Kottbus, took 14 hours. His plane was hit by flak and the lead plane of his flight was shot down. On his second mission his plane was again hit by flak. On his third, just after he left England, one of his engines caught fire, and another began burning on the way across France. Told to use his own judgment, he went on to Merseburg, just over the German border, bombed a target there, got back to England and landed with one of his engines still on fire.

On February 22, Emmet was flying his fifth mission in eight days, the fourth having been an extra one with some other crew than his own. At noon on the 22nd, four or five hours out from England, over Germany, but before reaching the target, the formation started through a large cloud front. With visibility zero, Emmet, on the extreme left of the formation, steered still further to the left to prevent collision. Soon his plane was bucking and rolling in the "prop wash" of the plane immediately ahead and to the right, which had evidently also moved over to its left. Then there was a crash, not due to collision as the men for a moment thought, nor to enemy action. Overstrained, the B-17 had broken apart in the middle.

The ball turret gunner and two other men in the waist, who got their parachutes on and were thrown clear, were the only survivors. As they came down out of the cloud, they saw the two parts of their plane falling to the ground. The three men landed in a farm-yard. One of them had a .45 revolver and they were able to stand off a crowd of civilians armed with pitchforks, until the arrival of some German soldiers, who took them prisoners. On June 8, American troops found the graves of Emmet and the six other members of the crew who had died in the crash.

Two years of training; eight days of combat service; five missions in those eight days; killed at twenty-four. Do we, in what the world calls peace, remember, reflect, foresee?

In January, 1942, on graduating from college, Emmet had married Eleanor Morley, and their daughter, Kathleen, was two years old when he went overseas.