In 1940, he left the Atlantic, and, with his wife and two small children, Suzanna, aged two, and Henry Sage, just born, he retired to Maine to complete a novel, his second, the writing of which he had been trying for two years to combine with his editorial work. When he was inducted into the Army in June, 1941, the book was still unfinished, and it so remained, although he worked on it in every leave he had until his departure overseas in 1943.

In North Africa and Italy, he served in the Military Intelligence. A fellow-officer wrote that "he had a great knowledge of the people we deal with" and that he was "exceptionally mild and gentle, quiet and reserved, but yet keen." Some phases of the work evidently went against Wallace's grain, for he once exclaimed in a letter that he would have to learn to tell the truth again when he got home. Thinking of the war's causes, and consequences, he wrote in August:

"I try to read Dante... You say to yourself, 'This is mine, I feel it and understand it' and the centuries are gone between. Today is very hard to comprehend and politically more confusing than his day, so that his opening clarity is wonderful and we understand how he stood at the gate in his 33rd year, I think, and commenced his long journey with a sense of sin. We have it very strongly and I'm glad I knew that when I tried to write my book. I understand it better now. We are morally obligated.'"

Thinking of America, he wrote in October to his mother:

"It seems strange to me to realize there will be no point in looking at once to see what damage has been done to your house and mine and places known and lived in. We've been lucky more than we deserved, and perhaps we shall pay just as dearly in the peace we make after the war."

In the early days of the assault on Italy, he served successively with three different divisions, learned "the sounds of various guns, managed to get through with a whole skin" and "in our own line of business to hit upon some first-rate material." "Coming back into the army again for a rest," he was recommended for a captaincy. On November 18, 1943, near Caserta, while changing a tire on a car, he was run over by a truck and killed.

HOWARD LAPSLEY
1929

Howard Lapsley, killed April 30, 1942, in a practice dive-bombing operation near Block Island, was the first of more than thirty Alumni of St. Paul's to die in training accidents. Thirty-one years old, married and the father of three young children,—the oldest was seven,—he had joined the Navy shortly after Pearl Harbor, had been through the first Indocitration School at Quonset, and was completing his training in Air Combat Intelligence. His death brought home to many the deadly seriousness of war.

Lapsley entered the First Form in 1923 and graduated in 1929. He became an Associate Editor of the Horae, rowed No. 7 in the Halcyon crew and was a Supervisor in Brewster. In the autumn of 1928, during the Hoover-Smith presidential campaign, he was the leader and organizer of the School’s Democrats,—eight when he began and eighty when he got through—: they marched in the Election Day parade, fully equipped with brown derbies, home-made, and a real donkey. Nor were politics the only field in which he exercised leadership at St. Paul's. He was a very loyal person, he had a warm and subtle sense of humor, and he was afraid of no one.

His business career,—between his graduation from Harvard in 1933 and his entering the Navy in 1941,—was characteristic of him in more ways than one. The first venture was an ordeal. Though he did not know it, the business was already shaky when he went into it, and its head, a friend of his, was taken very ill soon afterwards. Lapsley stuck to it, ran the business himself and tidied it over several difficult years, drawing almost no salary,—though he had a family to
support and no independent means. His next step is described in a letter from the President of a securities firm in Boston: "Howard came to me in July, 1938, and asked for a job. I had no place for him, but liked him so much that I told him he could come in and try to make a place for himself. He proceeded to do just that. I made him Vice President of the Company."

The first Quonset School opened in February, 1942. "It has been a full and active week," wrote Lapsley to his mother. "The first days were unbelievably confusing, miserable and homesick for me, and reminded me of those partings we used to have in the station on my return to St. Paul's. I must have muddled through somehow because I was made Platoon Commander on Wednesday. We march everywhere. It was difficult in the beginning. There is a vast amount of work to be got through, and practically no time to do it, what with meals, classes, divine service and drilling under the light and expert hand of the U. S. Marine Corps. It is a magnificent organization, this school. There are endless watches, duties and jobs. Everyone feels a lap behind and worried. None of the work is impossible, but there is much too much for the time allowed. It is an old trick of the Navy to give a man more than he can do. The Officers are absolutely magnificent."

When he graduated, he was recommended for the Air Combat Intelligence School. In his last letter to his mother he wrote: "I am stuck here this week-end, spending a sober and reflective Easter Eve. When they called me up about the A.C.I. school, they told me that in view of my youth, and other qualities which they charitably attributed to me, I would certainly go to sea on a carrier. For myself, I naturally would like the glamour of a carrier, but when I think of the family and leaving them for God knows how long, to God knows what kind of a future, I feel slightly frosty in the middle. We never knew what an intricate and enveloping web of interdependence between ourselves and the children we had built up, and perhaps we never would if we hadn't gone coldly and calculatingly about taking it apart and laying it away in moth-balls for the duration. I suppose we will just have to continue to plan the cold storage of our life. The whole school is fairly sombre tonight. I was interested and amused to find out that the big dread of all was the actual moment of saying good-bye to the wife and children,—that awful black bird of parting that has perched on my shoulders since infancy, destroying my homecomings and filling my vacations with dread."

Only a few days afterwards, before he had said good-bye, Howard Lapsley died in line of duty. To him and to his only brother David, killed in 1944, flying the Hump, there is a memorial in the graveyard of St. Matthews' Church in Bedford, New York: "Two brothers who lived to bear their country's arms and died to save its honor."

Howard Lapsley was married to Eleanor Hallowell in 1934. They had two daughters, Eleanor Hallowell Lapsley, who was a year old when her father died, and Marian Ladd Lapsley, who was then three. Their oldest child, John Willard Lapsley, entered the Third Form at St. Paul's in 1949.