



JAMES RUSSELL PARSONS, IV

1940

James Parsons came to St. Paul's in 1936 and spent three years there. He played on Old Hundred football and hockey teams and later won his Freshman hockey numerals at Yale. In his Freshman year he also joined Yale's first Army Air Force unit. The day before being called to active duty, in August, 1942, he was married to Pamela Capps.

Commissioned Second Lieutenant in May, 1943, after training in Texas, Missouri and Kansas, he went overseas that September and was stationed at first in North Africa, co-pilot of a B-24 in the 376th Bomb. Group. In November, after he had completed ten missions, including two over Vienna, the group moved to Italy and were stationed near Foggia.

On December 28, 1943, Parsons was flying his twenty-fourth combat mission. A formation of Liberators were assigned to bomb the railway lines at Vicenza. They failed to meet their fighter escort but continued nonetheless to their target. There they were attacked by waves of German fighter planes. In the ensuing battle, eleven of the sixteen bombers and forty of the enemy fighters were shot down. Parsons' plane was one of those destroyed, and he himself was killed after bailing out. His crew mates, in view of their own and other information, are convinced that he was machine-gunned by an enemy fighter pilot before reaching the ground.