Notes about

Ivan Rolland McKirgan

Born: **11 October 1924**
Place: St. Charles, Madison County, Iowa

7 December 1941
US declares war on Germany & Japan (Age: 17)

2 June 1942
Graduated from Indianola High School, Indianola, Iowa.

5 September 1942
Enrolled in Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa
Entered Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa. Member of the Simpson College Basketball team. They played Iowa State that year in Ames, Iowa in the Armory building. In the 1943 Zenith, Simpson College year book, Ivan is a member or pledge of Kappa Theta Psi (page 109)

September 1943 (Age 18)
Enlisted in United States Army Air Corp. (There was no "Air Force" at that time).
Army Serial Number: 37 677 442
Date of Induction: 27 August 1943
Date of Entry into Active Service: 15 Sept. 1943
Place of Entry: Camp Dodge, Iowa

August/September 1943
Got "Called Up" for duty. Spent two weeks at Camp Dodge (Just North of Des Moines, Iowa). Then sent to Shepard Air Force Base/Field, Wichita Falls, Texas for Basic Training.

November 1943 (Age 19):
Then shipped to Tempe, AZ at Arizona State Teacher's College for ten hours of Flight School in a 65-horsepower Piper Cub. College Training Detachment.

March 1944
30,000 Flight Trainees released to go to Radio School, Gunnery School or Armor School. The government could see the end of the War. Went to Yuma, AZ for Gunnery school.

May 1944

Graduated from Gunnery School at Yuma, Arizona. Real hot. Received Gunnery Wings.

June 1944
Seven-day furlough. Came home, 1370 23rd Street, Des Moines, Iowa, USA.

June/July 1944
Reported to Lemoor Field, California for assignment to "OTU" (Overseas Transition Unit).

August 1944
Shipped to Tonopah, Nevada. This is where the "crew" is formed to practice as a crew and to eventually fly together during the war. Crew # 114. Flew training missions until Nov. 1944. Received Air Crew Member Wings.

13 November 1944
Our crew was sent to March Field, California for P.O.E. (Port of Embarkation).

Crew 114	
Pilot:	William H. Myers, Jr. (Wife: Ruth) 5755 East Weaver Place Littleton (Engleweeds), CO 80111 (303) 796-8270
Co-Pilot:	Joe Z. Hillis (Wife: Jeanne) 905 East Seventh The Dalles, OR 97058 (503) 296-2582 (Deceased 1995)
Navigator:	Joseph B. Pohl 725 Miami Street Westmont, Johnstown, PA 15905 (814) 255-5759 Shot down 20 January 1945 on second mission as “Mickey Op”. Spent the rest of the war in a German prison-of-war camp.
Navigator: Assigned April 1945	Theodore P. Sizemore Seattle, WA
Bombardier:	William S. Lane (Wife: Helen) 1415 Galisteo Street Santa Fe, NM 87501 (505) 293-6181

	(Decease Jan. 1996)
Engineer:	Donald W. Croy “Watson” 301 Sixth Street Finlay, OH 45840 (419) 422-5981
Radio Operator:	Dudley C. Snyder KIA 21 March 1945 over Vienna, Austria
Nose Gunner:	Charles A. Martin Brother in German Army Originally from Hamburg, Germany
Tail Gunner:	Ivan R. McKirgan Military Occupational Specialty & No.: Airplane Armorer Gunner 612
Top Turret Gunner:	Charles (?Clifford?) B. Coffman Kansas City, MO
Ball Turret:	Edward V. Luhaney “Lou” 2152 Gardenland Drive Niles, OH 44446
Casa Mate: Got Pohl’s bunk Marsh’s Bombardier	Lindley H. Pate (Wife: Lorraine) 201 Alexander Drive Rocky Mount, NC 27804 (919) 443-3886

15 November 1944:
Took troop train to Newport News [Hampton Roads], Virginia.

16 November 1944:
Boarded a "Banana Boat"(290 foot ship formerly used by United Fruit Company in service between New Orleans, LA and Guatemala.) [A merchant ship] and set sail for Italy. They are escorted by US Navy vessels (Part of a 6 ship plus 4 Destroyer escort). The trip took 13 days. They left on 13 November 1944 and arrived in Naples Italy on 26 November 1944. The trans-Atlantic course was not in a straight line, they had to "zigzag" in order to avoid German U-boats [Submarines].

29 November 1944:
Arrived in Naples, Italy [West Coast of Italy]. The harbor was full of sunken ships. The air base was on the East coast of Italy. Took British troop ship for journey from Naples, thru the Messina Straits (between the tip of the boot and the ball), thru the "instep of the boot" and then to Bari, Italy, on the East coast.

1 December 1944:
Arrived at Pantanella Air Force Base, 15 miles south of Cerignola, Apulia, Italy.
Assigned to the 15th Air Force, 464th Bomb Group (H), 779th Bomb Squadron.

Pantanella airfield was a semi-permanent airfield located approximately 15km south of the Cerignola, Apulia, Italy.

It was part of the Foggia Airfield Complex, a series of World War II military airfields located within a 25 mile (40 km) radius of Foggia. It had extensive taxiways, hardstand parking areas, a steel control tower and capacity for approximately 150 heavy bombers with large support facilities with blister hangars as well as wooden structures. The airfield was completed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers with two parallel PSP (Perforated Steel Planking) runways in May 1944.

The airfield opened months earlier, in February 1944, and became home to two Heavy Bomber Groups of the Fifteenth Air Force, composed of 6 squadrons in total. Both Bomb Groups (464th Bombardment Group (H) and 465th Bombardment Group (H)) flew the B-24 Liberator and participated in both strategic and tactical bombing missions throughout southern and eastern Europe. Over time both Groups earned two Distinguished Unit Citations whilst at Pantanella.

After V-E (Victory in Europe) Day, both Groups were assigned to 'Green Project', which was the return of troops from Europe to the United States via the South Atlantic Transport Route. For this role B-24s were modified with sealed bomb bays, the removal of all defensive armament, and internal fuselage equipped with seating to carry approximately 30 personnel. The airfield remained in operation until the end of the war and closed in July 1945.

26 December 1944 0200 hours:
Awoken to get ready for first mission. First, they ate breakfast, briefed for a couple of hours, and then prepared for flight. Ivan flew with another crew on this first mission; the rest of his crew did not have their first mission until 31 January 1945 (Ivan's second mission). They were to get a break after their first 5 missions, but this never occurred. Ivan flew 26 Missions.

First mission: Odertal, Germany [a major German synthetic oil and petroleum refinery plant located in the Upper Silesia region (then part of Nazi Germany, now Zdzieszowice, Poland)].

21 March 1945:
(15th Mission) Radio Operator & Crew member, Dudley C. Snyder, T/Sgt., was KIA (Killed In Action) over Vienna, Austria. Son of Mr. & Mrs. Otto G. Snyder, DDS, of 308 South Franklin Street, Winamac, Indiana. From my, Craig C. McKirgan, recollection, Dudley Snyder was a member of Ivan's flight crew (radio operator). Another crew was going on another mission and needed a radio operator and Dudley went with that crew and was shot down on that mission.

25 April 1945:
McKirgan's last mission. Linz, Austria
After 26 Missions, 5 Battle Stars, Air Medal and 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, Ivan finished his combat.

30 April 1945:
Adolf Hitler commits suicide in Berlin, Germany

1-7 May 1945:
Isle of Capri, Italy: "Rest Camp".

7 May 1945:
Germany surrenders unconditionally.

25 May 1945:
Crew left Italy in a B-24 bomber (Black How) to go home. Lost engine en route to Marrakech, French Morocco, North Africa. Flew by the way of the Azores, St. John's and then to Gander Field, Newfoundland on 26 May 1945. While in Newfoundland, the pilot did not leave to go back to the USA as ordered, they stayed for another 6 days because of icing on the wings and they did not have de-icing equipment [I am sure that the pilot was not going to risk this flight after having survived the war].

6 June 1945:
Flew to Bradley Field, Connecticut, then by train to Camp Patrick Henry in Mass. where the crew was then disbanded. Ivan then took a train to Jefferson Barracks, MO. Here is where Ivan was notified of his discharge. Others, who may not have completed a full tour of duty in Europe, were sent to fight in the war against Japan. "Our group of Enlisted men, who had 25 or more missions, were told we would not be sent back to combat."

15 June 1945:
Ivan was then sent to Santa Anna, California for 10 days for R&R [rest & relaxation] also home to Des Moines for 30 days.

15 July 1945:
Sent to AAF Separation Base, Lowery Field, Colorado for final discharge.

Date of Separation: 20 Oct. 1945 ("Honorable Discharge")

Place of Separation: AAF Separation Base-Lowery Field Colorado 20 Oct. 1945: (Age: 21)

Officially discharged. Honorable Discharge and Good Conduct Medal.

"SERVED AS A TAIL GUNNER IN A B-24 BOMBER BASED OUT OF ITALY. FLEW 26 MISSIONS. WAS IN COMBAT DECEMBER 26, 1944 TO MAY 23, 1945. SERGEANT, TAIL GUNNER B-24 BOMBER WITH THE 15TH AIR FORCE, 464TH BOMB GROUP, 779TH BOMB SQUADRON. Five (5) BATTLE STARS, AIR MEDAL, Two (2) OAK LEAF CLUSTERS AND GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL. INDUCTED AUGUST 27, 1943. HONORABLY DISCHARGED OCTOBER 20, 1945."

October 1945 (Age 21):
Returned to Des Moines, Iowa to live with his mother and sister on 23rd Street. Returned to one semester at Simpson College and then took a semester or two at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Then worked at odd jobs (J.C. Penney's, Pioneer seed Corn Company as a foreman for a de-tasseling crew).

1946:
Was a sophomore at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa. Knew Meri Van Vliet (Class of 1947) of Delta Delta Delta sorority.

10 November 1946:
Ivan traveled to the state of Indiana and visited the family of fellow crew member Dudley C. Snyder, T.Sgt., who was MIA over Austria. Dudley's parents Dr. & Mrs. Otto G. Snyder, DDS, of 308 South Franklin Street, Winamac, Indiana. Sisters: Bernice Snyder (Indianapolis, IN), Annabell (husband Elvin) Mangold (Winamac, IN), Jeanetta (husband Carl, & dtr. Carletta) Stark, (Chicago, IL) From my, Craig C. McKirgan, recollection, Dudley Snyder was a member of Ivan's flight crew (radio operator). Another crew was going on another mission and needed a radio operator and Dudley went with that crew and was shot down on that mission.