

1st Lt. Thomas P. Rose
34th Squadron
Pilot

Tom Rose graduated from advanced training at Luke Field in May of 1944. He was then sent to Moses Lake, WA where he flew P-39s for 6 weeks and then P-38s.

In October 1944, his group was split up and half of them were sent to the Philippines to fly support missions in P-38s. The other half, including Tom, were sent to Baton Rouge, LA, where they flew P-47s as part of the 2nd Air Force. (Something about 20 hours in my notes?) "I always said that the only reason we were getting flying time in all those planes was they didn't know what to do with us."

Then Tom was assigned to the 468th Squadron of the 508th Fighter Group in Hawaii, arriving on 1/6/45 and staying through July. The 508th primarily flew P-47D "Razorbacks", although they also spent some time flying P-51's. The P-47s had all been used somewhere prior to being assigned to the 508th

In July, an officer in the 468th announced a need for replacements in the 413th Fighter Group. Apparently some pilots had been lost, literally, on a mission, having lost their way.

"I and a friend, Jim Sticna from Madison, WI, volunteered for ourselves, and Jim volunteered for his buddy, Jack Ehlers of

Kendalville, IN, who was partying at a hotel in downtown Honolulu. Jim and I found Jack and we shipped out from Hickam Field on a C-54 for Okinawa via Kwajalein, Guam ETC on Saturday, July 14, 1945."

Tom knew that he needed 25 missions to get back home and his daughter had just been born in May '45. He was hoping to hasten his return to his family by volunteering to fly combat missions.

"I transferred to the 413th around July 18th-19th in 1945 and was assigned to the 34th fighter squadron. I just flew five missions before the war ended on August 15th. I never even got to know the guys I flew with on those missions except the Flight Leader... Captain (William H.) Huntley." Tom remembers that Capt. Huntley "looked like a mountaineer", like "someone who should be hunting rabbits and squirrels". Tom's fellow volunteers were assigned to another squadron.

"I didn't know anyone in Headquarters."

Tom remembers that the 413th had "very nice airplanes". New P-47Ns with "autopilot and bubble canopies". The 34th was a "double strength squadron", with two pilots assigned to some aircraft because of the lengthy missions, but Tom doesn't recall anyone else flying his plane. He remembers escorting B-29s. "We got lazy with our navigation, they did it for us."

Tom also recalls that when the 413th Fighter Group arrived in Hawaii, they were to replace the 508th, which would then ship out to Okinawa. However, a General thought there was no reason to take one group off of a ship and put another on, so the 508th stayed on Hawaii.

Tom was discharged on 4/8/46. "I didn't know what I was going to do." Tom, his wife and daughter, moved in with his widowed father, an attorney in Jefferson, MO. Tom had spent about a year and a half at the University of Missouri before the war and now spent about six weeks contemplating his future.

Tom's father was a lawyer at the time. "My Dad came out on the porch one night. I think I was drinking a beer. He said; 'Got any idea what you're going to do? You could have a filling station or become a merchant', and he offered some other ideas." "Dad", I said, "I don't know." Tom's father replied, "If you can't think of something to do, you can always be a lawyer."

Tom became a lawyer, as have his son and grandson.