

War Stories (cont.)

were saved and with new medicines and therapy he was able to return to active duty in time to be one of the first to fly into Japan at war's end.

CBI LIFE MEMBER KUDO

Six foot, two inch HPA Life member, Ruseckas, Joseph A., ATC pilot from Dergaon and Lal-hat flew the CBI Hump between February 1944 and October 1945. He is Past Commander and presently Adjutant of Basha 26, Worchester, MA. According to an article by Andi Esposito in the Business section of the Worchester (wooster) MA, Sunday Telegram, May 23, 2004 Joe played a role in Aviation History much greater than flying supplies over the Hump.

After high school graduation in 1936 Joe became a full time employee at the North Grafton airfield. Bartering work for instruction earned him a pilot license in 1938. After ferrying different makes aircraft from factories to air corps fields for the Ferry Division, Air Transport Command, US Army Air Corps, Joe, now qualified in both C-47 and C-46 was sent to India.



You wouldn't want to miss this airport!
 Guess where! See below for answer.
Photo Courtesy of Roger Johnson

Joe remembers vividly the January night when 31 planes were lost to one of the worst storms over the Himalayas. The May Day emergencies required Joe to stay aloft in a holding pattern for nearly an hour before landing in Kunming.

After the war Joe became North Grafton Airport Manager and Chief Pilot. One of his students was David Clark whose company was transforming its two-way stretch cotton and elastic knitting technology from undergarments to outer garments that protected military pilots from blackouts.

One day Joe used the Clark Co. plane to pick up a couple of test pilots, Chuck Yeager and Bob Hoover, at Westover Field. Joe then joined Clark Company and became a pressure suit pattern maker. Joe, at

35,000 feet in a B-29 over Edwards AFB, CA, assisted test pilot Marion Carl (WWII Marine fighter ace) into the Clark Company's first full pressure suit then into the Skyrocket suspended below the bomb bay. Joe was principal designer of that suit and Marion Carl roared to 83,235 feet astride that rocket engine.

Rusecka's most challenging project was the design of a full pressure suit for the pilots of the single-seat Lockheed A-12 which followed the high altitude reconnaissance U-2 and altitude busting X-15 planes, and preceded the Air Force's SR-71 Blackbird. The design challenges included extremely high cockpit temperatures, survival upon ejection at supersonic speeds, landing in cold water and providing a range of motion in the suit, all within one year to the test flight.

Joe Ruseckas retired in 1986 and no longer flies but "in April, 2004, in recognition of his contributions to aviation and for significant advancements in research and development at David Clark, Mr. Ruseckas received the Massachusetts State Award for 2004 from

the Aero Club of New England."

Editor's Note: Hopefully Joe and wife Marcia will make this year's Denver reunion.

HOW CELESTIAL NAVIGATION CHANGED HISTORY

by Andy Kelly

There were no scheduled trans-oceanic flights prior to WWII. Pan-American Airways, using amphibious aircraft, began flights between Washington, DC and Spain to adapt the marine sextant to aerial use. These flying boats had a large seating capacity but their fuel capacity limited routes.