

News of Wife's Remarriage Told Returning American Flier

Tachikawa, Japan—(UPI)—The bottom dropped out of the joyous homecoming today of Airman 2C Daniel C. Schmidt, one of the 11 U. S. airmen freed two days ago from captivity in Red China.

The Air Force, which had carefully hidden the truth from him since Thursday, broke the news to Schmidt that his 20-year-old wife has married another man, in the mistaken belief he was dead. He was told before the airmen were here on the second leg of their journey home.

Schmidt raced to place an international telephone call to his wife as soon as he debarked with the other 10 from the plane which flew them here from Clark Field, the Philippines.

The distraught airman didn't even wait to open two packages delivered to him by the Red

Cross. Red Cross officials said they could not disclose whether either package was from his wife, who was living as Mrs. Una Fine, near Soda Springs, Calif., before she disappeared two days ago.

Air Force officials, who refused to let the airmen talk to newsmen, said it was decided to break the unhappy news to Schmidt on the flight here from the Philippines.

All the freed airmen were sent to the Air base hospital for a thorough physical checkup which the Air Force said "might take three or four days."

On their arrival here, Col. John Knox Arnold, senior officer of the B29 on which all 11 were shot down, was first to stride down the ramp. He was followed by the other 10, all

looking tired but crisp in their newly issued suntans.

Maj. William H. Baumer, who had his foot amputated while a prisoner, kept up with the others, despite his crutches, as they filed out past white helmeted Air Force police.

A luxurious four-engined DC4, formerly Gen. Douglas MacArthur's private plane, landed at the U. S. Air Base here with the airmen at 10:55 p.m., 10 hours and 40 minutes after leaving the Philippines.

The airmen were taken at once to the Tachikawa base hospital where they will be housed during a stopover in Japan.

The fliers were still flashing the broad grins with which they have greeted everyone since they returned to freedom in Hong Kong yesterday.

The airmen's departure from the U. S. base in the Philippines was delayed today because the men, overjoyed at their first hours of freedom, stayed up late last night. All 11 overslept, and the flight which had been scheduled after breakfast was postponed until after noon.

Lt. Col. James Davin of St. Louis, Mo., who is attached to the Far East Air Force's surgeon's office, said a physical checkup given to the men "revealed they are in very fine condition and well able to continue on the trip."

"They are the finest bunch I ever traveled with," said Davin who accompanied the fliers from Hong Kong.

Newsmen were prevented from talking with any of the released fliers, but the airmen appeared to be in good health and

good spirits.

Lt. John W. Buck of Armatwaite, Tenn., one of the 11, received his promotion to captain, effective Feb. 15, just before they left Clark Field for Tokyo. Col. John Knox Arnold, leader of the released men, pinned the captain's bars on his shoulder.

The fliers crossed the border to freedom at 12:37 a.m. EDT Thursday at Hong Kong when Peiping made good on its promise to free them after holding them since the end of Korean War in defiance of terms of the armistice.

Soda Springs, Calif.—(UPI)—An observer of the modern Enoch Arden triangle involving Mrs. Una Schmidt, 20, said today she believes the red-haired mother will return to her first

husband, Airman Daniel C. Schmidt, who was released from a Red China prison.

Mrs. Eleanor Fowler lived just a short distance from the trailer occupied by Mrs. Schmidt, her 21-year-old son by Schmidt, and the lumberjack she married in the belief Schmidt was dead.

He is Alford S. Fine, a cat-skinner for a lumber contractor.

Mrs. Fowler said Mrs. Schmidt was "a very mixed up girl," and had considered leaving both men, to let both court her. But she added she had a feeling "Una may go back to her first husband."

"Well, he is the father of her son," Mrs. Fowler said. "And well, I just think that is what may happen. That is, if her first husband will want her now."

But Mrs. Fowler said Mrs.

Schmidt was not at all decided when she and Fine hitched their trailer to an automobile and disappeared from the High Sierra camp early yesterday.

"She told me 'I may just leave here, and take my son with me, and go away from them both—then let both of them court me and make up my mind.'"

Mrs. Fowler was unable to shed any light on the mystery as to where and when Mrs. Schmidt's marriage to Fine took place. "She didn't say where, or what day," Mrs. Fowler said.

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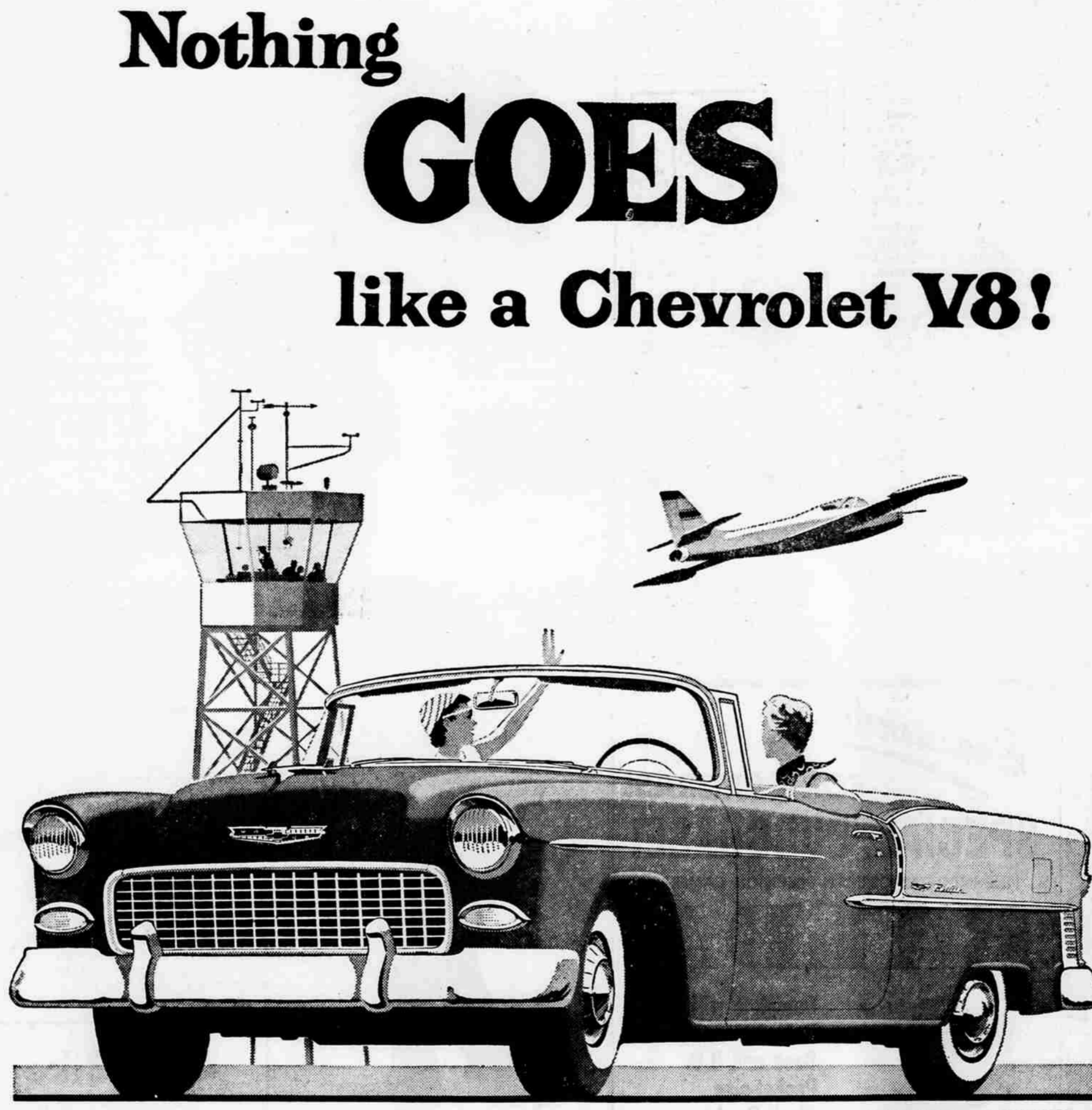
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