

# Welcome Home



Staff Photo by Bill Lane

**Lt. Cmdr. Paul Galanti and Wife, Phyllis, on Parade Through Richmond**

The Galantis Saw Many Signs of Welcome, Such as the One Behind Them

## *Galanti, Plus Dimples, Gets Welcome 'Home'*

By **SHELLEY ROLFE**

Saying, "He's coming, he's coming," middle-aged women rolled back the years at the State Capitol yesterday and reacted like teen-aged girls confronting a rock 'n' roll star.

The "he" is Lt. Cmdr. Paul E. Galanti, who, on a beautiful, spring-like day, was welcomed "home" by Richmond, a city that was home for his wife, Phyllis, for most of Galanti's seven years as a prisoner of the North Vietnamese.

The welcome included a motorcade and a formal ceremony at the Capitol's south portico that blended ritual with the serious and the emotional.

Galanti provided some of the emotionalism with his first word to a crowd of approximately 2,000 that included Gov. Linwood Holton and Mayor Thomas J. Bliley Jr.

The word was "Wow."

Amid applause, Galanti added, "I'm overwhelmed...you've been wonderful to me."

Galanti faced the crowd with a boyish smile and dimples that were brought into sharper focus by the smile. He had an electric effect on his audience, particularly its women members, both during and after the Capitol ceremony.

AS GALANTI left the portico to hold a press conference and have lunch at the executive mansion, women reached out to touch him, or just to get a closer look.

There were suggestions that the dimples and his boyish look might enhance for women, his role as a hero, and this thought was underlined by Holton, who told the crowd that Mrs. Holton had talked of Galanti's "beautiful dimples."

Holton also struck the most serious note of the ceremony with a short speech that dealt

with "the cost of freedom." An aide had said that Holton would give a "symbolic welcome on behalf of the people of Virginia to Galanti, who never has lived in the state.

"Thousands have died, thousands have sustained injuries to maintain freedom," Holton said. "The wounded are unable to be part of this society as we know it.

"They have paid part of the cost....We do not overlook these sacrifices or forget these men....To the maimed we say, thank you, too."

Later, in an informal chat with newsmen, Galanti said, "The guys in the veterans' hospitals are much more deserving...I don't want to be a retroactive hero...I don't look on myself as a celebrity."

MOPPING his brow, he said, "I hope..." and then broke off the sentence when asked whether he was ready for an end to welcoming ceremonies. He would, he said, continue to call Richmond home as long as he was undergoing treatment at Portsmouth Naval Hospital. "I've got to undergo minor surgery for a pinched nerve in my hand (suffered while he was in captivity)," he said.

Did he plan to stay in the Navy? "Yes...I have a lot of flying to do," he said.

Turning serious, he said, "I didn't believe the stories of disunity in the United States I heard" while he was a prisoner. He had not, he said, "heard any talk of disunity" since his return to the United States last month.

Galanti struck a unity theme in his remarks at the Capitol. "We discovered that if we were not united, we (the prisoners of

Continued on Page 3, Col. 1