

Santa Clara Gives It All for Alvarez

After spending 8½ years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam, Lieutenant Commander Everett Alvarez Jr. was welcomed home in style yesterday by 125,000 fellow Santa Clara citizens.

The style was strictly American, the main event being "a good old-fashioned family parade," as Larry Marselli, Santa Clara's vice mayor, put it.

Marselli, who served as master of ceremonies for the parade, made the comment as a flat-bed truck passed the reviewing stand, carrying the family band of the Rudy Madrid family.

The Madrid float was the only family entry of the 123 units that marched in the parade, but it was typical of the old-fashioned spirit that marked the celebration.

BANDS

There were Cub Scouts, Veterans of Foreign Wars, dozens of high school bands and girls' marching units, community youth groups, the Santa Clara Chapters of the American War Mothers and the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association.

A number of bands played "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again" for the returned POW and some played "Anchors Aweigh." "Very appropriate" songs, Marselli said.

Alvarez rode in a car leading the parade and, as his convertible passed the

crowds, men and boys rushed to shake his hand and women to kiss him. Lots of people waved small American flags.

"His hands were soft," one teen-ager told a friend who didn't get to touch him.

When his car reached the reviewing stand, Alvarez took his place with his parents and sisters, sitting impassively, now and then smiling shyly and rising to salute the colors as they passed.

THANKS

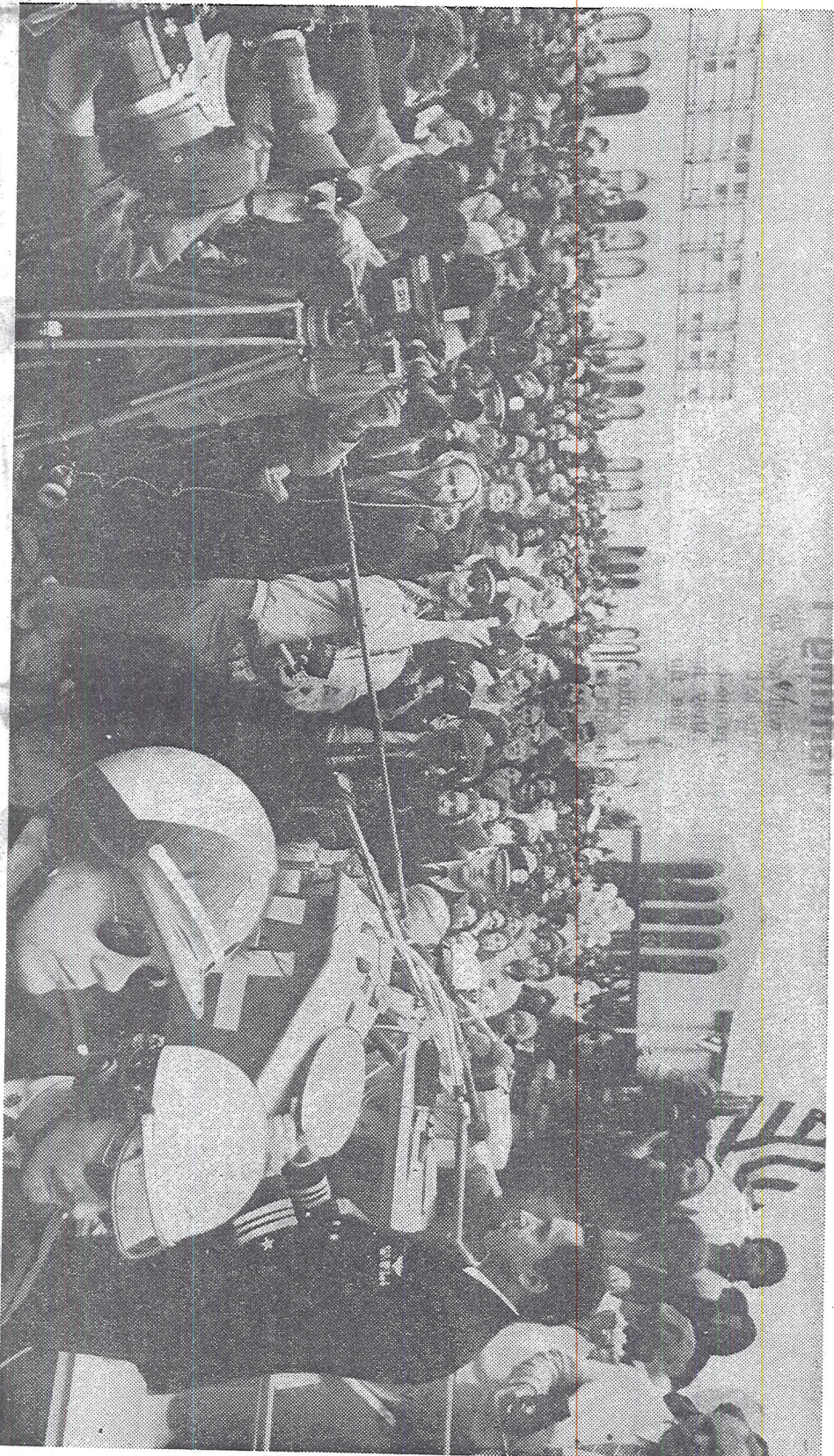
After the parade, Alvarez, looking dapper in his Navy uniform, offered the crowd his "humblest thanks."

He reminded his admirers of the men "who didn't come home in the same condition I did — the disabled, the crippled and maimed," the men still in prisons or missing in action, and "those who gave the greatest sacrifice."

But he drew the most applause with one simple statement: "It's great to be back."

"There have been many changes in the city but you people are still the same," he said. "You're beautiful and I love you."

Yesterday was the last of three days set aside in Santa Clara to celebrate Alvarez' homecoming. Other activities were a Mass of Thanksgiving, a banquet sponsored by the city and a ceremony changing the name of Westwood Park to the Everett Alvarez Jr. Park.



Commander Alvarez spoke to the crowd after the parade, offering the people of Santa Clara his 'humblest thanks'

By Larry Tiscornia