“WHEN you were still up on Broadway you could hear the ruckus, the hollering. The peace demonstrators trying to outshout the construction workers. The construction workers hollering, ‘U.S.A., all the way’ and ‘We’re Number One.’ And the peace demonstrators screaming up there that the war was unjust and everything else, right by the Treasury Building on Broad Street there.

“There was just a lot of hollering and screaming going back and forth until whoever the individual was—oh, he was no spring chicken, he was 40, 45 years old—that spit on the flag. I was maybe four or five rows back in with the construction workers. I saw him make a gesture, you know, a forward motion. That was it. That was the spark that ignited the flame. It came out in the roar of the crowd. ‘He spit on the flag! He spit on the flag!’ And of course the construction worker got up there on top of the monument and he gave him a good whack and off came the guy’s glasses and I guess he followed his glasses off the pedestal there.

“And then there just seemed to be a rush, a mob scene. The chant then was, ‘Get the flags up on the steps where they belong. It’s a Government building.’ And they can say what they want about the New York Police Department, they coulda had the National Guard there with fixed bayonets and they would not have held the construction workers back then.

“When we first went up on the steps and the flags went up there, the whole group started singing ‘God Bless America’ and it damn near put a lump in your throat. It was really something. I could never say I was sorry I was there. You just had very proud feeling. If I live to be 100, I don’t think I’ll ever see anything quite like that again.”

Continue reading the main story

* * *

JOE KELLY’S big chin and right hand tremble as he is caught in the deep, remembered passions of that noontime on Friday, May 8. He is 31 years old, a brawny 6-feet-4, 210 pounds, with blue eyes and receding red hair under his yellow plastic construction helmet decorated with U.S. flag decals and “FOR GOD AND COUNTRY.”

It is now late afternoon, nearly two weeks later, and we are sitting in a gray wooden construction shanty on the sprawling World Trade Center site in lower Manhattan where he works. Joe is a well-liked, skillful mechanic in an intricate and demanding trade, elevator construction—installing the elevators and the heavy complex machinery to make the cars run.
On that violent day, soon after he came down for his half-hour lunch break from the 42nd floor of the soaring red steel skeleton of Tower “A” — another high, seemingly timeless, world which will rise 110 stories overlooking New York and the industrial hinterlands of New Jersey, where men walk almost casually on springy planks laid over open steel now 70 flights up—Joe Kelly reached his “boiling point” He found he could not “sit back” any longer, and he became a demonstrator for the first time in his life. Though “not much of a shouter,” and a strong believer that violence solves nothing, he also shouted and threw his first punch in more than 10 years.

During that long menacing midday several hundred construction workers, accused by reporters of using metal tools as weapons, were joined by office workers on a rampage through lower Manhattan. They beat up and injured 70 antiwar protesters and bystanders, including four police men. With cries of “Kill the Commie bastards,” “Lindsay’s a Red,” and “Love it or leave it,” they surged up to City Hall. There they forced the flag, which had been lowered to half-staff in mourning for the four dead Kent State students, to be raised again. Then, provoked by peace banners, they stormed through Pace College across the street. It was a day that left New York shaken.

His face taut with fury, Mayor John V. Lindsay went on television to call the workers’ attacks “tough and organized,” though the unions promptly denied any influence. But he lashed out even more strongly at the outnumbered police whom many witnesses had accused of inadequate preparations and of standing by tolerantly during the assaults on the peaceful rally. Only six arrests were reported. He charged the police with failing as “the barrier between [the public] and wanton violence.”

Others called the workers bullies or Nazi brownshirts. “We have no control over what they want to call us says Joe Kelly. “But I think that the large majority of people, going as high as 85 or 90 per cent, are more than happy. Not so much for the violence but for the stand that we took. And now they’re standing up. The construction worker is only an image that’s being used. The hardhat is being used to represent all of the silent majority.”

IT was the wild start of two weeks of almost daily noon-hour, flag-waving, belligerent, damn-Lindsay (the most common signs called him a Communist or a faggot) and praise-Nixon countermarches through downtown New York which Joe Kelly enthusiastically joined. Some of his fellow workers even happily lost an hour’s pay for marching too long after lunch. Despite the fact that many of the men returned late following Friday’s slugfest, none were docked. “I was going to dock one man who came back an hour and a half late,” says Frank Pike,
general elevator construction foreman, “but he said, ‘I saw these kids spit on the flag. What could I do?’ How could I dock the man?”

The union word had come down: “Demonstrate all you want but be careful, no violence.” Others say that the union tried to stop the men from all informal demonstrations. In any event, there was no more major violence; thousands of helmeted police patrolled the streets.

The construction workers loaded their unfinished skyscrapers with huge U.S. flags and their hardhats became a national symbol of fervent support for the Nixon administration and its Indochina war policy. President Nixon was even presented with a hardhat at a White House ceremony. The climax came on May 20 when an estimated 100,000 construction workers and longshoremen sang and chanted from City Hall to Battery Park in a massive display of jingoistic sentiment probably unparalleled during the uncertain years of the Vietnam conflict.

That day Joe Kelly was given the honor of carrying the gold-fringed American flag with the gold eagle, its wings outspread, on the top of the pole, leading a contingent of hundreds of his fellow workers from Local No. 1, International Union of Elevator Constructors. With his yellow helmet on, he marched, resolutely serious-faced, rarely showing a thin smile, ignoring the pretty secretaries leaning over the police barriers. He displayed the training he received when he was an M.P. with an Army honor guard stationed in Heidelberg, West Germany. Around him Broadway boomed with the chants: “We're Number One,” “U.S.A., all the way,” “Good by Lindsay, we hate to see you go.” The marchers sang “God Bless America” and “You're a Grand Old Flag,” “Yankee Doodle” and “Over There” blared forth. The workers cheered and whistled through the applause from spectators and the shower of ticker tape and computer cards from high office windows.

They marched to the green lawns of Battery Park with the breeze coming off the upper bay, cooling a hot blue day. Joe Kelly’s friends came up to him and shook his hand, saying, “Beautiful,” “Like a champ, Joe.” Joe clenched and unclenched the fingers of his right hand, which had held the flagpole for two hours. “I feel fine,” he said. “This is terrific. It’ll wake a few people up. This will happen not only down here but in the rest of New York and across the country now.”

The first thing to happen, though, was that Frank Pike docked himself and all the elevator constructors an hour's pay for parading instead of working. A few men never made it back to the job that afternoon.

Within the next few weeks in belligerent defense of Nixon's Southeast Asia policies, nearly 20,000 construction workers paraded (and pummeled antiwar spectators) in St. Louis, and several hundred workers
scuffled with students holding a peace rally at Arizona State University in Tempe.

J**OE KELLY** is proud, confident and outspoken in the old American style. He is almost mystically proud of his flag, his country, the establishment, and eager to end the Indochina war by striking more aggressively, though the deaths of young soldiers and innocent civilians sadden him. He is determined to be on guard against Communism and to crush it wherever it threatens his nation. Joe is convinced that a subversive conspiracy of teachers, influenced by foreign powers, is brainwashing the students to Communist beliefs. Distressed by the hippie life-style of so many youths, he is also furious at student radicals who burn and shut down schools which his taxes pay for and which most of his fellow workers cherish because they never had a chance to go to them. He is a stalwart charter member of Richard Nixon’s silent majority, a devout Roman Catholic and fiercely loyal to his President, whose office he regards with almost holy respect.

**“It's taken me 10 years to get where I am”**

“The Pope to the Catholic Church is the same as the President to the American people,” he says. “He's the one who decides. He's in fallible when he speaks of religion as far as the Catholic Church goes. I’m not saying Nixon is infallible. But he's Commander in Chief of the armed forces. He's in charge.”

Vietnam: “I just hope that these people give Nixon the play to go in there in Cambodia and knock the living hell out of their supply lines. If this is what it takes to stop the loss of American lives, well, let's go the hell in there and get it over with.”

Mylai massacre: “I don't believe anybody in the United States, nice and cozy, has a right to judge them [the accused] until everything comes out in the trial.”

Kent State: “They [the National Guardsmen] must have felt their lives were threatened, that's why they shot.”

Inflation: “I have faith in Nixon. I think he'll curb inflation, given the chance.”

High taxes: “If this is what it takes to run this country, I don't mind paying them. You couldn't live anyplace else like you do here.”

The flag: “I think of all the people that died for that flag. And somebody's gonna spit on it, it's like spitting on their grave. So they
better not spit on it in front of me. You think you could get it better someplace else—well, then, don't hang around, go there.”

Unemployment: “I don't know where they're getting these figures from [up to a five-year high for all jobs and 11.9 per cent in construction] because here in New York you got a [construction] boom going on.”

JOE KELLY has what used to be faithfully accepted as the old-fashioned, authentic American credentials: he is hard-working, conscientious, obedient and trusting in authority, an adherent of law and order, patriotic, sentimental, gentle and affectionate with his loved ones, angry and determined to right wrongs as he sees them, moderately compassionate, a believer in the virtues of his way of life.

To the antiwar protesters and others grieving and critical over America’s present course in Indochina and what they perceive as unfeeling repressive policies at home, he probably appears as an anachronism. To them, he is Joe Kelly, yesterday's comic book hero, a relic from the somehow simpler, self-righteous days of the old world wars when, with a grin and a wave and a song, Americans marched off to solve the world's problems. “The Jack Armstrong of Tower 'A',” one of his fellow workers called him approvingly.

Joe Kelly and millions of Americans like him would not share the gloomy conclusion of John W. Gardner, a Republican and chairman of the National Urban Coalition, that the country is disintegrating. They see a country in momentary disarray, under stress, but they retain a sturdy optimism. They know but do not suffer the dark fear that a complex and subtle civil war is wasting the land with hate and with overt and invisible violence: white against black, conservatives against liberals, workers against students, old against young, fathers against sons. Even the old hawks of organized labor now face opposition within their own ranks over the Indochina war.

America heaves against the old grain. The kids are on the loose trying to shake off the crusty habits of the country the way a snake sheds its skin. The antis feel depressed by their own Government, if not worse, and sense mendacity everywhere.

The kids, Joe Kelly thinks, ought to feel lucky to be in America where they have the legitimate right to dissent and stage peaceful demonstrations. If they did the equivalent of burning draft cards or desecrating the flag in Russia or China they would, he says, be shot down in the street.

“These kids,” he says, “they can do as they feel like. I mean, burn, loot, steal, do anything they feel like in the name of social reform. But can the average Joe Blow citizen go out and do this?” A crime is a crime, he
says, even if it’s for social reform and he argues that there is a double standard of justice for students, especially in New York.

What about the kids' mockery of the Puritan ethic? “If they don't want to educate themselves or go out and work hard for a living and make a few dollars, spend a few dollars and save a few dollars for a rainy day, that's their prerogative. But in general, again, this has been bred into them somewhere. This is not the American way.”

JOE KELLY never thought the picture presented by his hard-working life would need any defense. There is his pretty blonde wife, Karen; two strawberry blonde daughters. Robin Lynn, 4, and Kerry Ann, 1½, and now a newborn son, James Patrick. “I had two cheerleaders,” he says, “now I got a ballplayer.” There is also a collie named Missy and a newly bought brick and shingle, two-story, $40,000 house on an irregular 50-by-100-foot lot, tastefully furnished, with a modern kitchen (“All you can get for two arms”), and a freshly sodded lawn on one of those breezy Staten Island streets with the gulls overhead, children pedaling red tricycles, the hum of an electric mower and a man hosing down a gleaming red Dodge Challenger, all the residents of the neighborhood blue-collar whites, doing well.

Joe Kelly and his neighbors, the steam-fitter, the bus driver, the policeman, the TV color processor, have worked too hard to get to that street to give it all up. They have had too many peace protests, too many moratoriums, too many harsh laments and shouted obscenities against their country, too many rock throwings and strikes and fires on campuses where they want their children to make it, too many bombings and too many Vietcong flags waving down the streets of their city, too many long haired youths and naked boys and girls, too many drugs, too much un-Americanism, not to feel angry and resentful.

Joe Kelly sits on his plastic covered orange couch in front of his new Motorola Quasar color TV console and seethes as he watches the 6 o'clock news day after day. What really galls him, he says, is what he considers small groups of radical students closing down schools. “In California,” he says, “they burned a bank to the ground. You just watch and boil. Who do these university presidents, responsible people, think they have an obligation to? The students are burning something every day. They're taking over something in the chancellor's office every day.”

And then that Friday morning, Joe Kelly mounted his turquoise Triumph 500-cc motorcycle, rode down to the ferry slip, read The Daily News and had a coffee as the ferry crossed to Manhattan, then rode his motorcycle again to his job. When he walked into the shanty
on the building site, he heard that a shoving incident the previous day between peace demonstrators and construction workers elsewhere in the downtown area had triggered the men from a number of skyscrapers to action. For the workers, “it was the straw that broke the camel's back,” he recalls. Spontaneously, Joe says, perhaps a quarter of the World Trade Center’s 212 elevator constructors decided to go down the seven blocks and “see what this peace demonstration was all about.”

* * *

“MY partner, Tommy, he climbed up on top of the light stanchion down on Wall Street and planted the flag up there, right in front of the Treasury Building, to a great round of applause. The flags were up on the top steps. The construction workers and the Wall Street workers, they had the steps of the Treasury Building filled and the demonstrators were down in the street.

“And they started to chant in unison ‘—no, we won’t go,’ and they just kept it up. And all of a sudden, just the same as the movement had started up onto the steps, the movement started back down off the steps. This chant that they kept up, it just raised the anger to a degree that it just seemed that everybody would just want to get down there and disperse them. When I say ‘disperse,’ I don’t mean physically take these kids and manhandle them, but just to break them up, break up the group and break up this chant because it just seemed so un-American.

“I guess the average construction worker is what you would call a flag-waver. You can call me a flag-waver any day of the week. I think that’s something to be proud of, to be a flag-waver, to be proud of your country. And these kids just kept it up and kept it up.

“As the movement started down off the steps, again there was a certain amount of them (protesters) that wanted to stand their ground and they’re dealing with men that work with iron and steel every day of the week and do manual labor every day of the week, and they just made a mistake. They just never heard about that discretion business. I will say this: there was as many of these antiwar demonstrators whacked by Wall Street and Broadway office-workers as there were by construction workers. The feeling seemed to be that the white-collar and tie mart, he was actually getting in there and taking as much play on this thing as worker.

“This was something. Listen. I’m 31 years old. I’d never witnessed anything like this in my life before and it kinda caught me in awe, that you had to stop and see what was going on around you. It was
almost unbelievable. This was the financial district of New York City, probably the financial district of the world, and here was this mass clash of opposite factions, right on Wall Street and Broad, and you could hardly move, there were so many people taking part in this aside from the 500 construction workers. It was just something that you had to stand back and blink your eyes and actually look a second and third time, and you couldn't believe that this was actually taking place in that particular area.

“There was one kid came after me, I don’t know why. He just came flying out of the crowd. I don’t claim to be a violent person. I couldn't possibly remember the last time I ever struck anybody. It had to be at least 10 years ago, maybe 12 years ago. And for some reason this guy picked out somebody and it just happened to be me. He carne running at me with arms flailing and I gave him a whack and back he went. He went down, I know that, and I just figured he wouldn't be back for more.”

* * *

JOE KELLY was brought up on Staten Island along with his younger sister, Eileen, who is now a telephone company secretary. His mother had come to America on the boat from County Cavan. His father, who was born in New York, was a pay master for Esso tankers coming into the port of New York until he died of a heart attack in 1959 at the age of 45.

“My father,” Joe Kelly recalls, “used to take me out to the ships on Saturdays to pay off. As a kid they used to let me steer, or let me think I was steering, and let me turn on the radar.”

Joe went to elementary and high school at St. Peter’s, a parochial school on Staten Island. “I wasn’t any angel,” he says, “I’m sure of that.” He had little trouble passing his subjects and developed a special interest in American history. His major passion, though, was basketball. In high school he played forward on the varsity and was a right-handed pitcher for the baseball team. In the afternoons he delivered The Staten Island Advance and worked in a drugstore. He graduated from St. Peter’s in 1956 with no specific ambition. He went off to St. Peter’s College in Jersey City on a basketball scholarship and lasted a year, passing his courses but admittedly lacking interest in his studies.

With the feeling that he had “had enough school for a while,” Joe became a seaman for Mobil Oil for three years. He served on coastal tankers between Texas and Maine and also aboard vessels in the Great Lakes and in New York harbor. Fearful of getting enmeshed in a life he didn’t particularly relish, he quit suddenly and enrolled in a night
business course at Staten Island's Wagner College. During the day he worked for Coca-Cola, visiting companies that were having trouble balancing their accounts; he hated this job, and left it after a year.

The elevator constructors had just come off a strike in 1960, work was piled up, and some of Joe's friends in the trade asked him if he wanted to come in. Joe says he “jumped at the opportunity” and he is now clearly a man who appreciates his work. His first job, before he was drafted into the Army in 1961, was with a crew automating the elevators at Bergdorf Goodman. When he came out of the service two years later, after enjoying the regimented military life, he went right back to elevators, where he has been ever since.

In 1965 he married a Staten Island girl, Karen Kelsey, who worked as an I.B.M. operator for the Irving Trust Company at 1 Wall. Her father is an office manager for a freight-forwarding concern and, like her, a Republican. Then the children started to arrive and last summer, two days after Joe began what was to be come a three-and-a-half-month strike, they moved into their own two-family house. The upstairs six-room apartment is rented to a plumber and his family at $200 a month. 

His first big jobs after the Army were in what is called the modernization department of the Otis Elevator Company, for whom he still works—putting automatic elevators in the Municipal Building, in 15 Broad Street, in Con Edison at 14th Street and in 61 Broadway. Then three or four years ago things began to slow up. “That was about the time,” he recalls, “when every Friday the ax was falling and you never knew whether you were gonna have a job Friday afternoon or not.” But Joe managed to hang on and he never lost a day because of a lay-off. Now elevator constructors talk of a 10-year feast in New York.

Two and a half years ago he was switched to elevator installation and went to work on the General Motors Building. It was his first time on high open steel. “The first morning I will never forget,” he says. “The building had just recently been topped out. This was somewhere around the first or second week of January. So when I arrived up on the top of the building, which was about the 52d floor, I looked out over the horizon and I saw one of these clocks that flashes the time and the temperature. It was 10 minutes after 8 and it was minus two degrees, and I thought I’d made the big gest mistake of my life.”

But he endured the bitter winter cold—and the heights never bothered him. He worked on the T.W.A. terminal at Kennedy Airport on an escalator job, picked up odd electrician's and rigger's jobs during last summer's strike, and late last fall finally became a mechanic after
seven long years of apprenticeship as a helper. He started at the World Trade Center, considered the biggest elevator job in the world, just before Christmas.

Until the last two years or so, Joe Kelly had been making about $8,500. Now he is up to $6.86 an hour and with double pay for the abundant overtime at the trade center, he expects to earn between $15,000 and $18,000 this year.

“This is the first year that I’ve ever made anything like this,” he says. “It took 10 years to get here but now I guess I’ve arrived.” He also augments his salary and renting income by bartending three nights a week.

Elevator construction may be well-paid, but it is a hard trade and can be dangerous. A good friend of Joe Kelly’s, Mike Clancy, 42 years old with five children, plunged 25 floors to his death several months ago at the World Trade Center.*

Workers must also beware of tools or material falling from higher stories. “Like if anybody drops anything,” says Joe, “they immediately scream, ‘Look out below,’ and you got to get under something just as quick as you possibly can so it will ricochet off of that instead of off of you.”

Joe attends noon mass on Sundays and he also coaches basketball and baseball teams in a boy’s league in Blessed Sacrament parish. (After the Army, he spent three years as a weekend counselor at an orphanage on Staten Island.) His reading consists of The Daily News, the Advance, the sports section of The New York Post and Popular Mechanics Magazine. The Kellys go out to the movies perhaps every six weeks and may stop in afterward for “a couple of drinks in a nice, quiet, respectable place.” Once a week his wife leaves him at home when she goes to play bingo. There is usually a Christmas party for the men on the job and Otis throws a picnic in the summer. Recently the elevator constructors and their wives had a $20-a-couple dinner dance at the Commuter’s Cafe on Cortlandt Street, across from the trade center site. Proceeds from a raffle went to Mike Clancy’s family.

On TV, Joe enjoys Johnny Cash and Jackie Gleason and sometimes Dean Martin. He likes to be in bed by 11 P.M. Before he was married, Joe played basketball four nights a week in a community-center league. With family responsibilities, his heavy work schedule and his relative slowness of foot today, he has cut it out completely. “I go down once in a while to watch and eat my heart out,” he says.

Joe gets his extracurricular workouts now around the house, putting in sod, helping to grade the backyard for a large above-ground plastic
swimming pool for the children, planting two blue spruces and yews and rhodo dendrons in the front.

The Kellys haven't been able to take any vacations, though Joe has had two weeks off yearly and will get three weeks under the new contract starting this summer (there was either a strike, or they were saving for the house, or the children were too small). Perhaps twice a summer they drive down to the New Jersey shore around Belmar in their 1967 English Ford station wagon and go swimming.

Why does he work so hard? “A lot of people ask me that,” he says. “I wanted the house. Right? I wanted something nice for the wife and the kids, someplace where the kids could grow up and have their own backyard. They wouldn't have to be running out in the street. And now I have the house and I want it fixed up nice. And maybe when it is fixed up nice, I'll relax a bit.” Meanwhile, he is at the “boiling point.”

* * *

*MY* belief is, physical violence doesn't solve a damn thing. One party has to sway the other party to his belief and then the argument is settled. I honestly don't believe that there will be any more physical violence in New York City. I think that one Friday and it's over with. I don't like to see any body get bounced. I saw some of those kids go down and I didn't think they were gonna make me get up. I certainly don't agree with them. I would much rather prefer grabbing them by the head of the hair and taking a scissors and cutting their hair off, something that was much less violent but you still would have gotten your across.

**Hardhattism may lead to a much softer approach**

“Up at City Hall it became obvious that they had better get that flag back up to the top of the mast. Within a few minutes the flag went back up and everybody seemed nice and happy and again they started singing ‘God Bless America’ and the national anthem and again it made you feel good. Not that I like seeing those four kids out in wherever it was, Kent, get killed. I don’t like to see anybody get beat up, never mind lose their life.

“I don’t think Mayor Lind say has the right to put that flag at half-staff. That flag represents this country, so the leading representative of the country, who is President Nixon to me, is the only one that has the power or the right to raise or lower a flag.”

* * *
JOE KELLY says he never even asked what his father's politics were, believing it to be a man's private affair. How did he arrive as a militant member of the no-longer-silent majority? What brought him to believe that Communism was undermining America from within?

“Two people stand out in my mind,” Joe says, “why I’m taking part. Joe McCarthy often said, beware of this school system, they’re going to infiltrate, brainwash the kids. And Khrushchev in 1960 banging on the U.N. table. He said they wouldn’t have to take over this country physically, they’d do it from within.” Though he was only a youngster during McCarthy’s heyday, Kelly says: “It’s some thing Pve read somewhere along the line.” He feels that the students are only dupes in the hands of subversive teachers who, Joe hints, are under the control of foreign powers. In some way, the bad teachers have to be weeded out, he says.

Joe Kelly first voted in 1960, when he chose John F. Kennedy over Nixon for President because he was impressed with Kennedy's performance in the TV debates. Though he still reveres President Kennedy, he wouldn’t vote that way again. By 1964 he had swung to the right and voted for Goldwater over Johnson. In the 1965 and 1969 New York mayoral races, he voted the Conservative party line for William F. Buckley Jr. and John Marchi. He cast his ballot for Nixon for President in 1968.

It was the Goldwater campaign that crystallized Joe’s feeling about the war in Vietnam. “I think that it all goes back again, like history repeating itself, to Hitler,” he says. “When Hitler kept marching into these countries and, instead of just fighting Hitler’s country, you were fighting all these countries after a while. You just can’t let Communism take over everything around you be cause when they got every thing around you, they’re gonna come after you.”

Three men who command his admiration now are John Wayne, Vice President Agnew and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley. In fact, Joe wishes New York could borrow Daley for six months to give the city a stiff dose of law and order. He has complete disdain for Mayor Lindsay. He believes Lindsay has turned New York into “welfare city” and is trying to be the champion of welfare recipients and the young antiwar generation in a bid for the Presidency. “Do what you want in Lindsay’s city,” he says caustically—“burn the schools. He's got to raise the budget this year to pay for what they burned down.”

Of the recent influx of minority workers into his once closely bound union, he says, “They’re here to stay, entitled to. But if they’re going to work with us, if we go up on the iron and risk our lives walking it, by God, they have to go along with us. There’ve been several instances in the city where they’ve refused be cause they didn't have to.”
As for a black family living on his street, he is adamantly against it, feeling that panic selling would drive down the value of his property. “I had to bust my backside for five years to get that down payment for that house,” he says. “I am not interested in seeing all that go down the drain.”

It is on this precious ground—his home and his family—that he takes a defiant, mildly worried stand. He would like his daughters to go to college or nursing school and his son to get as much schooling as possible to become a doctor or a lawyer—“something where he can use his head to make a living, not his back like his old man does.”

While his wife hopes and prays that her daughters will never wear their hair straight and long like the hippies and that her children’s minds will be protected in parochial schools despite the danger of lay teachers, Joe Kelly tells a story about a neighbor’s friend’s son, a boy of 16.

“This boy,” he says, “came home from school one day and he told his father he was a bum, that he was part of the establishment. And this fellow was a World War II veteran, decorated several times and wounded twice. And he just turned around and he gave the kid a good whack and I guess he broke his jaw or broke his nose and the father was in a turmoil. This is his own flesh and blood talking to him.

“I cannot imagine having my kids come home and tell me I’m a bum because I believe in the establishment—and there is nobody that believes in the establishment more than I do. The more I see of this stuff, the closer I try to become to my kids. I believe that my way is correct, the establishment way, law and order first, and this is what I’m gonna do my damndest to breed into them so that they don’t get some other off-the-wall ideas.”

Joe says that if his children ever called him a bum because he believes in the flag, they’d better leave his house. “I would do everything to control myself not to hit them. I mean, this is what I brought into the world. But it’s awful hard. I certainly can see that man flying off the handle and whacking the kid. Oh, yeah, he certainly did regret it. But his big question is, where did his kid get this trend of thinking?”

JOE KELLY doesn’t believe that melees such as the memorable one at noon on May 8 are any solution. So his answer, he says reflectively, is to arm himself with education, engage in dialogue.

“When they throw a point at you,” he says, “be able to talk to them on their theories on socialism, Communism. This is the best way—to talk them out of the stuff instead of just saying it’s un-American, or using your fists.”
Ironically, Mayor Lindsay has said much the same thing: “Perhaps their [the construction workers’] demonstrations, in the end, will help us break through to a new dialogue in which we not only talk, but listen.”