



LEGO STAR WARS BASE  
BY DAVIS BROOKS

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hey everybody...  
Let's make!  
a zine!  
WEST 23RD STREET & ELSEWHERE

IN THIS ISSUE (SORT OF):

PRICE: make  
me an offer!



# THE 97 CENT HALLOWEEN STORY!

## Foreword by Davis the Critic

My good friend Davis was just telling me this story, witch ( ha ha) I hope you will find amusing. By the way, our critic says if you need clothes for a Halloween costume, go to Sand Dollar.

One time, I was going to be the Star Wars character, Boba Fett, for Halloween but I needed to find the costume (we already had the Boba Fett helmet). My Dad, Patrick, (the one putting together the zine you are currently holding) suggested that we try the neighborhood thrift store Sand Dollar. While we were walking there, my Dad (the one previously mentioned) told me not to get my hopes up and said that we could probably use some other Star Wars costume and convert it to be Boba Fett. Two minutes later I found an amazingly detailed Boba Fett costume. Originally my Dad thought that it said the price was nine dollars and seventy cents, but the cashier told him it was 97 cents! That was one of my best and least expensive costumes ever.

Over the years Sand Dollar has me down, whether it's a Jango or a nice jacket and pants mud and tear to pieces for costume, they have always what I needed. So as the all critic says, go to Sand Dollar.

**Happy Halloween from Davis and yours truly, Davis the Critic.**

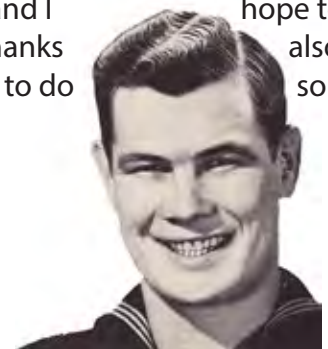


Location: Davis and Davis the Critic both live on West 23rd Street.

# Welcome to Volume 1 Issue 2

This time around we have more adults and fewer kids (c'mon kids!) and our longest piece yet in Kevin's travel narrative. I am very pleased with the contributions. My eternal gratitude to all who stepped up and contributed and I hope to see the rest of you in issue three! My thanks also to Zine Fest Houston for inspiring me to do something creative at least once a year.

**Patrick Brooks**  
**Zine Wrangler**  
**hey everybody... Let's make a zine!**  
**A West 23rd Street Production**



\*NOT PATRICK BROOKS

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**cover:** Altered "sweat pulp" (look it up) magazine cover by Patrick Brooks

**back cover:** LEGO Star Wars Base by Davis Brooks

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# Manventure

AN EPIC ROAD TRIP THROUGH THE HEART OF THE AMERICAN WEST

BY KEVIN JEFFERIES

**D**uring the summer of 2013, my twin sons and I – with the enthusiastic encouragement of my wife – took a two week road trip. We hit the northern states, started in Chicago and headed west to Idaho and Montana and back. The next summer – with even greater encouragement – we took a three week road trip. We drove through the southwest to California and the Pacific Coast Highway before hugging the Mexican border home.

I have no real idea why.

There's the obvious reason. The scenery is beautiful, and we had fun, lots of it. But something else drove me forward. I'm the son of a road tripper. Moving forward is in my blood. Just don't ask me what I'm after or what I hope to find. I couldn't begin to tell you.

Destinations are irrelevant. The movement is the thing.

Since my wife decided not to join us – choosing the luxury of solitude – my sons decided to call our trips “manventures.” This gave us the freedom to do the things men do when women are not around: eat in the car, belch, fart. I even let them cuss. We were solid testosterone – both real and imagined. I set my sights on the horizon and forged ahead.



Maybe I'd find epiphany, maybe not.

And every leg of every manventure offered its own chance at epiphany, some more than others.

The Badlands? Yes.

The Corn Palace? No.

The Grand Tetons? Absolutely.

Sturgis? Well . . .

Deserts seem more conducive to it. There's biblical ambiance coupled with the very real chance of death, even a likelihood of it if you aren't careful.

With this in mind, about a week into this summer's manventure, after Four Corners and Monument Valley, we set our sights on Death Valley. We woke up that morning – with no idea what day it was – in a motel in St. George, Utah. I wanted to camp out the previous night, but we were 15 minutes late getting to a KOA camp and I didn't want to risk sleeping on the side of the road that night.

The motel was fine, nicely derelict. Not in the best part of town. A petite woman was sitting on the stairs nearby crying into a cell phone when we walked into our room. I kept my eye on her out of curiosity. She walked off with a burly blonde man later that night.

The boys stayed up late watching TV while I slept, so we had a late start the next morning and didn't hit Las Vegas until well after noon. We were always up around 6 when we slept outside, but were lucky to be out by 11 when we found a room. We spent 3 hours walking around the Vegas strip, embracing the heat and checking out the scenery. The boys dragged me to the Hershey, M&M and Coca Cola stores. They still call the 15 foot tall chocolate Statue of Liberty one of the highlights of the trip. I don't know what to think of that.

We visited the Silver and Gold Pawn Shop on the way out of town. The boys had binged on some episodes of Pawn Stars and wanted to visit. In hind sight I think we should have bought one of the action figures of Chumlee they sold inside, but we didn't. I may live to regret it.

We hurried along 95 northwest of town and I started thinking about where we might stay the night, possibly in the park, possibly not. We had been winging it well the previous few days, but the landscape was becoming very desolate, very hot, and very, very dry. I'm not normally the responsible one in the family, but I suddenly had little choice. It was up to me to make good decisions. If not me, it would be the 10 year old twins.

It's a close call.



I thought it wise to fill up the gas tank and get a few gallons of water before driving into the park. A large red billboard with "BROTHEL" in bold letters on it appeared in the desert. Next to the brothel was a service station, cafe and store. I had my excuse to stop.

It turned out to be a brothel and a bar, so I thought about having a beer or two and giving the boys \$20 to eat something in the cafe. I would not have been the first father to do that, but I decided against it. I thought about the possible headline.

I told the clerk our goal the next night was a haunted clown motel in Tonopah, Nevada. She told me that the motel in Amargosa, just 20 miles southwest and near the entrance to Death Valley, was haunted also. We stopped to check it out. It looked like a Spanish hacienda with an old opera house on one end. That's where the ghost apparently lives - or whatever it is that ghosts do. The rooms were \$80 a night, and likely worth it. We were on a budget though, so we looked around and got back in the car and drove into the park.

The sun was starting to set and the dimming light let the colors of the park shine. Or glow. Or shimmer. Or whatever it is that desert colors in the dusk do. Death Valley may be deadly, but it is not empty. It's not crowded, but there's no secret about its brutal beauty. Many were drawn to it. I was. The boys seemed to be too. We stopped at one of the scenic areas and I watch the boys walk out into the landscape. In a fit of responsibility I made them take water bottles with them. They drank them dry.

I continued to try to figure out why I was doing this, why I rented a car for 3 weeks and headed west with no clear idea about where to go, aside from the compulsion, and why I felt I had to have my boys with me while I was doing it. I had turned 53 less than a month before, and while age doesn't bother me, the fact that I have less and less time to do these sorts of things - and see things I've yet to see - is becoming more apparent. I like to think I'm a realist on some level.

It doesn't really matter if you don't mind aging - which I don't - and don't feel any older now than you did when you were 21 - which I don't - but the fact of the matter is that you do get older and that has to be taken seriously. There comes a time when the diem has to be carped. And this was the time. But that by itself doesn't provide the epiphany that allows you to verbalize what is still only a gut level compulsion.

I let the boys wander off a good distance in the desert hills. The landscape was barren and I could keep my eye on them. If necessary I could run after them, but I knew it wouldn't be necessary. They sat in the middle of the desolation and got photogenic.

When we got back in the car it was almost dark and the heavy business of finding a place to stay hit hard. I planned on camping in the heat, but I had no idea where. The map indicated a place called Furnace Creek was a few miles ahead. We got there soon enough and \$17 later we had our tent set up and I was drinking beer while the boys

swam in a pool surrounded by German tourists. Life became very sweet very fast. The pool was open until midnight.

As we walked back to our tent after the pool closed I suddenly realized that we were far from any city lights and that there wasn't a cloud in the sky. I told the boys I wanted to drive away from the campground further into the desert for a few minutes and show them something cool.

One of their many virtues is a willingness to do things I think are cool. Things they may not. In exchange, I let them watch as much TV as they want when we get to motels. It's an implicit arrangement we've made. It works well for us.

I drove out about a mile or two, and pulled over to the side of the road. We got out of the car and shut off the lights. It was inky black outside. The sky was just a tad lighter than the landscape, so we could follow the edge that marked the border between land and sky.

And as our eyes adjusted we could see the entirety of the Milky Way stretched end to end across the desert, every last single star in the sky.  
Bar none.

I never learned the constellations - except for the Big Dipper, which was plain to see - but they were all there, much of them lost in the white haze of stars that was bright enough that we could see each other lying back against the car, staring. We were looking at eternity. We laid back in silence for more than a few minutes. I like to think the boys were awestruck. It may not have been as impressive as a large chocolate Statue of Liberty on the Vegas Strip, but it might have been. They will have to sort that out for themselves.

An occasional car would drive by and its headlights would briefly drown out the stars. We did the same to others when we drove out and would again when we drove back. As our headlights washed over them we could see people laid out on the hoods of their cars staring upwards.

Whatever I was after, others were after too. I was not alone and took comfort in that. I still hadn't pinpointed just what I was after, but I felt that I was getting closer to it.

I felt my kids were too.



Location: Kevin and his sons  
live 1.5 miles from West 23rd  
Street.





*by Absalom J. Fortesque*

**M**y roommate points out that a large frog is sticking to the wall and he wants to kill it with a mallet. I dissuade him from this course of action over concern for the animal's life and fears that this would make a huge mess.

Who is the roommate? No-one from real life I am sure.

I pick up the cover of a CD-ROM spindle and some cardboard and successfully trap the animal which has now turned into a large yellow spider with somewhat rubbery black legs. My late mother shows up to help me take the thing outside.

I can feel the creature struggling against the cardboard with many flailing legs. As I get ready to release it, I notice that it has morphed again into something more like a scorpion with a stinging tail. My Mom however refers to it as a "cobra". As I release it, it jumps onto my arm and I panic a bit but am able to pull it off. It falls and burrows into the ground.



Location: Reverend Fortesque is on a continuing expedition through the hidden realms of Leng, Kadath and Lost Carcosa and has never set foot on West 23rd Street to his knowledge.



Location: Camilo lives 30 miles from West 23rd Street.



*by Patrick Brooks*

Back in the day when I was growing up in Saudi Arabia our junk food options were severely limited. The company had a decent dairy and made superb ice cream in little cups with snowmen cavorting on them. Popcorn was always available and the local theater made some of the best I have ever had until they eventually stopped doing it because we spoiled brats kept trashing the theater with left behind and thrown bags of popcorn. Yes, kids would throw half-finished bags of popcorn at each other while the movies played. We clearly deserved the popcorn ban.

Potato chips were mostly non-existent. Apparently the rigors of global shipping were too much for the delicate foodstuffs. In the company commissary the best analogue we had were the sturdy,

indestructible Durkee potato sticks. In the nearby Arab town of Al Khobar at a store called Balookis one could get semi-rusty cans of Ruffles and Lay's barbeque flavor potato chips of unknown age and provenance but the contents of them were reduced to small stale chiplets that really weren't worth the trouble.

It was because of this barren, junk food-deprived environment that rare trips to the motherland for summer vacation were such a revelation. At the 7-11 unheard of riches of the American junk food palate could be easily sourced. I can honestly recall being a bit anxious once when we had arrived from the Baltimore/Washington airport at my aunt and uncle's house. I wanted to be done with all of the familial pleasantries so I could run on down to the local 7-11 and get my junk food fix.

My favorite was plain Doritos. I never liked the taco or nacho cheese flavors and back in the seventies we were mercifully free from the horrors of varieties like Cool Ranch and Jacked™ Doritos.

### **The Coming of Pringles**

The one innovation that allowed us to have potato chips in Saudi Arabia was the arrival of Pringles. These reconstituted quasi potato chips shipped just fine overseas protected as they were by their stackable hyperbolic paraboloid shape and space-efficient "tennis ball" can. Yes they did not quite have the same taste or mouth feel of the genuine article (Pringles has argued in court that they are snacks not potato chips) but they were much closer than anything we had been able to obtain previously.

When I was last in Saudi Arabia in 2000 and visited the company commissary, it seemed that the potato chip shipping problem had been solved as they had more or less anything that you'd find in a domestic grocery store. Those current expats have no idea how lucky they are.

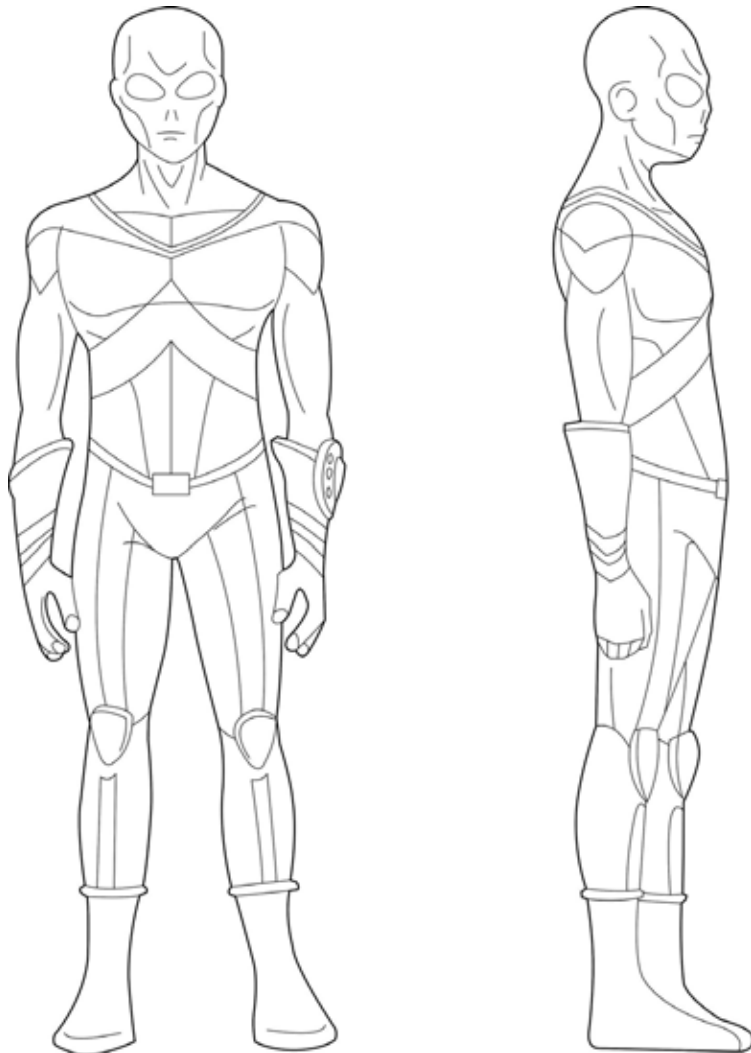


**Location:** Patrick lives on West 23rd Street.



# SPACE ART

## BY SAM KUŽEL



Location: Sam lives 30 miles  
from West 23rd Street.

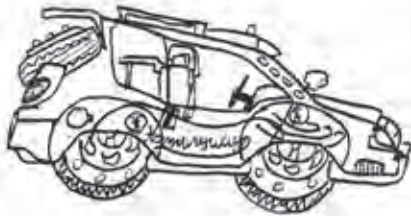


# Hemingway Motorcar Company Brochure

by Luke Morrison



Hemingway cars, SUVs & Trucks



Hemingway C-300  
Sports Coupe  
AC/DUO/CD, Manual 6 speed  
TOP SPEED 200 MPH, TURF



Hemingway S-200  
2-door hatchback  
AC, DUO/CD, Auto 6 speed  
TOP SPEED 180 MPH, TURF



Hemingway S-300  
4-door hatchback  
AC, DUO/CD, Auto 7 speed  
TOP SPEED 170 MPH, TURF



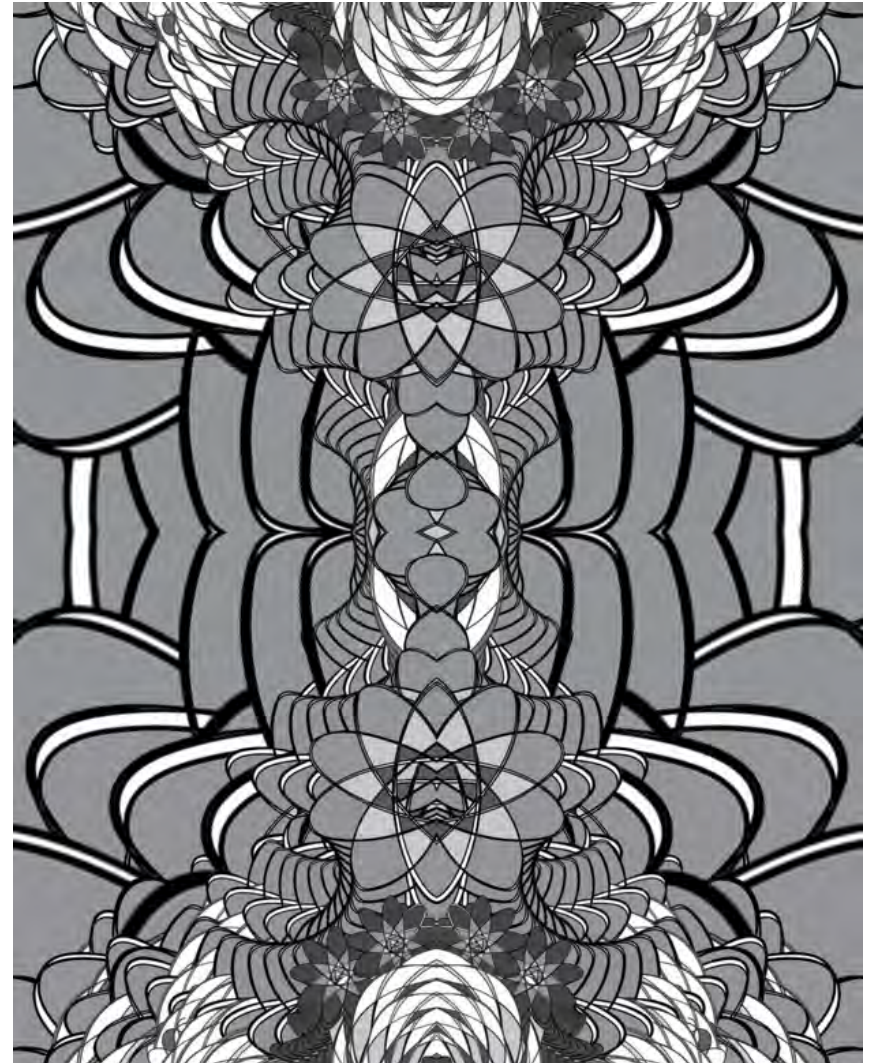
Hemingway T-200  
Truck  
AC, DUO/CD, Auto 5 speed  
TOP SPEED 150 MPH, TURF



Location: Luke lives .6 miles from West 23rd Street.

# PATTERN

by Nina Hays



Location: Nina lives .7 miles from West 23rd Street.

# KINDNESS IS COMPLICATED

by Peggy McDonald

Nanny we called her. To us grandkids she was as the world should be. She listened when we talked as if we were Aristotle. She took us to the creek and we stayed as long as we wanted and no longer. Every time we went to Nanny's house we always made a beeline for the refrigerator because there was sure to be something homemade, yummy and plentiful to eat. In Nanny's house, sugar was one of the essential food groups. She had chickens and turkeys and a horse trough with minnows in it and lots of mud sometimes. When I was there, I was the center of her world. She was all about making us kids feel safe and indulged. She worried and fussed if we hurt ourselves and would rock us if we were sad and tell us it was all going to be ok and I believed it. I now know it is



not always going to be ok and best to be prepared.

Grandmother Hilton was all about books. When we went to her house everyone greeted everyone warmly and then promptly sat down with a book and read until it was about time to go. We talked a little about what we had read. Then we gave warm salutations and left. If you got hungry while you were there, you got Post Toasties with milk in the morning or a can of Campbell's Vegetable Soup at or after noon, if you asked. If several of us grandkids were there at the same time we could run wild outside while the grownups read inside. We grandkids tested the thesis that the dog "Beano" would eat anything. Dried corn, figs from the fig tree, wiggly and green things from the creek, left over Post Toasties and Campbell's Vegetable Soup. Beano would, indeed, eat anything. We kids all took turns trying to start the old car. It was hard to start but sometimes we did get it started and we would drive it around the big yard unchecked. We could not really see over the dashboard without hopping up and down. We climbed the trees to heights that would have been certain death if we

had fallen. It is a wonder we all lived to tell the tale. Grandma Hilton was not unkind. In her world, I think now, it was a kindness to be left alone with your book, thoughts and experiments.

There was Aunt Joy. Her name is proof God has a sense of humor. She was a terror to everyone, not least of all to herself. If you did the least little thing that annoyed her, she would look crossly at you and yell crazy things. We were not used to that. She seemed always unhappy. So we kids tried to be smiley and soft spoken to and around her. For sure we would not give Aunt Joy any bad news; like we didn't like the green peas she was serving us. Her husband, my mom's brother, tried his whole life to be kind to her so she would not be cross. She was cross anyway and unhappy and he died early. Rumor had it that she drank the strong smelly stuff when family was not around. What we grandkids would have told you was kindness to Aunt Joy, I think now, was not so much kindness. Aunt Joy, for her own happiness, I now understand, needed to have had someone along the way, truly kind enough to model for her what healthy boundaries are all about; to require that, as a condition of a relationship with her, she needed to take awareness of and respect for the impact on others of her communications, verbal and nonverbal. Someone who cannot take in account their impact on others is not ready to give or receive kindness and Aunt Joy modeled that as a lonely place.

As life has gone along, I have learned some nuances of kindness; probably not all of the nuances that there are to learn.

Nanny taught me a lot about the heart of kindness. But that kind of kindness can be like sugar, feels really good and tastes good in occasional doses, but the reality of the world is different. The world is not about me and kindness must be experienced in the context of reality in order to be managed in a healthy ongoing way.

Grandma Hilton taught me that there is a brainy part of kindness. That knowledge and independence and self responsibility, expected and retained, can be a most valuable kindness. This is kindness on a more head engaged level. There are decisions to make about what is truly kind or unkind.

Aunt Joy taught me that what we kids thought was kindness to Aunt Joy, was unkindness in masquerade. Everyone has a choice of what comes in and out of personal space and a responsibility for the effects of that traffic on others.

Leaving me to ponder the relationship of truth to kindness. Is Truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, always kindness or can it also be unkindness.? It is complicated.



Location: Peggy lives 2.6 miles from West 23rd Street.





# DAVIS THE CRITIC STRIKES AGAIN!!!

Our critic has recently been spotted at several locations, most recently at La Hacienda Escondida, on 9/19/2014. He has before said that it is "muy bien". He says it is great for lunch after church, even with people you don't know (which is a true story by the way). Their motto is "like going to Mexico without leaving Shady

Acres", and the all powerful critic can verify that.

★★★★

Feeling thirsty after all that spicy salsa? Then head down to the Lucky Lemon lemonade stand. It is homemade goodness, handmade and organic local lemonade. Our critic has interviewed the owner, Davis Brooks. "We've started out small, only going out for a day, but we've grown". The staff who have included at various times Davis and his friends Kaveh, Zoli, Alex, Kendall, Luke and Jack would like to say thank you to the woman who gave me five dollars just for wearing a cowboy hat.

★★★★★



Location: Davis the Critic lives on West 23rd Street.

# BUS POETRY

by Patrick Brooks



Location: Patrick lives on West 23rd Street.





## A CITIZEN'S LAMENT

*by Robert Hughes*

**B**orn in 1930 and now in my mid eighties, I have seen my country at war a great part of my life. Some of the more significant ones have been WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and the very long and still ongoing war in Afghanistan. Also, current acts of war are being carried out in Iraq (again) and in Syria. In addition, although not current, recent attacks have been made in North Africa. I will be brief in suggesting this is excessive. But worse than excessive, with the sole exception of WWII, none of these wars was fought with fealty to the Constitution. It is shameful and a threat to our form of government that this is so and the citizenry ought to put a stop to it.

In what follows, I make four proposals, each requiring some expansion in recognition of the imperfect world of which we are a part. They are intended to make going to war a truly democratic matter.

First, no war shall be entered upon without a Declaration of War by congress as required by the Constitution. The president has no role in this process, either in requesting or writing such a declaration. The declaration should be written, of course, granting the president the authority for prosecuting the war. It should also set out why it is in the national interest to go to war and the goals to be accomplished that will benefit it. The latter point is especially pertinent in this age when the nation is no longer intent on territorial expansion.

Second, no war shall be fought except by a military force raised by an impartial draft from the eligible populace. One mechanism for doing this is compulsory military service for two years for all eighteen year old citizens in peacetime. This pool of active duty and reserve service members would form the civilian based force needed in time of war. It is particularly important to recognize that these troops are inherently civilians: they serve in the military temporarily and return to their civilian lives, enriching the country with their future lives. However, it is also necessary that the nation maintain a small standing professional military of both officers and troops. In them is the required knowledge of how modern wars are fought.

Third, all military materiel shall be produced at cost. No one should profit from war. Any loss of income accruing to stockholders should be regarded by them as their patriotic war effort. It could also be a spur to a quicker resolution of the conflict. In any event, their suffering pales to insignificance in comparison to those facing combat.

Fourth, the public should be kept fully informed as to events in the war, excepting only knowledge that would imperil troops in combat. To this end, the media should have access to the battlefield and encouragement from the military in recording the travails there and forming the history that should help future citizens from going to war unnecessarily by being uninformed or misinformed.



Location: Robert lives on West  
23rd Street.