

## Rolling up the Sidewalks

by George Burns

Rolling up the sidewalks refers to a town where the night life is so non-existent that they might as well be rolled up. While this is figurative, I have made it literal and assume that is Gus' job to do the rolling

*a sleepy little burg where they **roll up the sidewalks**  
at 9 o'clock and on moonlight nights the village  
fathers don't turn on the streetlights  
(Daily Illini December 3, 1933)*

Let's give Gus,  
    our small town's watchman  
who rolls up our sidewalks  
    every day like bales of hay  
        the night off  
        and let Muntadhar al-Zaidi (منتظر الزيدي)  
        the man who in 2008 threw his two shoes at George W Bush  
                shouting, *You dog!*

take the wheel  
    and roll up the sidewalks  
in front of the Pentagon  
and when he's finished that  
    roll up the hallways inside  
        so that our later-day Dr. Strangelove's,  
            Curtis Lemay's, Attila's and Tamerlane's  
with constellations of their glory sparkling on their shoulders and chests  
    are now in their offices  
        with no exit,  
            like all the millions  
                of human beings  
                    we have killed in my lifetime.

*No Gun Ri* massacre in South Korea,  
    300 strafed on railroad tracks then, from  
        both sides, machine gunned in a culvert,  
            mainly women and small children.  
"an unfortunate tragedy....not a deliberate killing"

Plain of Jars, Laos  
    262 million cluster bombs (bombies still kill 300 people a year).

El Mozote in El Salvador  
    800 civilians massacred but first,  
        women and girls raped  
            twelve year old girls were especially sweet.

Hooded man, Ali Shallal al-Qaisi (علي شلال القيسي),  
standing on a box in a crucifix pose  
with electrodes attached to his fingers.

Drones blasting Afghan wedding parties,  
the children leading the procession, first  
then the main party,  
but missing the bride and two girls  
who were killed on the third pass

turned lives,  
just like ours,  
wives and husbands,  
George and Barbara  
just like ours,  
Barack and Michelle  
into a pink mist  
and children (body parts everywhere),  
whose laughter was just like ours,  
set in their coffins and shrouds.

No exit from their offices with the rolled up hallways  
though they still wear the aforementioned constellations and  
now that it's almost night,  
Zaidi will drive the tractor  
with small front wheels and larger rear wheels  
into the night sky  
all the way  
to the Middle East  
deep in night  
with Ursa Major as a guide,  
then when the night sky lightens and  
the Bear sets in the West  
back Washington D.C.  
and drop a mountain of shoes on the Pentagon.

*Dissent: An Anthology to End War and Capitalism*