

Musings from my “haunted” Hermitage

by Larry F. Ginsberg

DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL!



“Maybe all the schemes of the devil were nothing compared to what man could think up.” Joe Hill

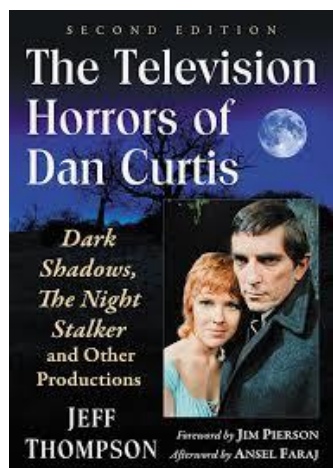
Who can ever forget those opuses of Horror from the literary masters of the Macabre, Lovecraft’s *The Dunwich Horror*, Poe’s *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Bran Stoker’s *Dracula*, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Robert Lewis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, amongst many others.

Do you remember cringing, shaking and shrieking during those weekend Matinees, watching *The Mummy* and *The Werewolf*, *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, *Friday the Thirteenth* and *Halloween*. We were riveted in our seats with fear and suspense by Lon Chaney, Sr. and Jr., Vincent Price, and Boris Karloff.

But, are you aware that the King of Television Horror was a Jewish producer born and raised in Bridgeport? Meet Dan Curtis born Daniel Mayer Cherkoss (August 12, 1927 – March 27, 2006), Producer, Director and Writer of man- made schemes of the Devil.

In the Dead of the Night, *Intruders* and *The Night Stalker* brought *Burnt Offerings* to the *House of Dark Shadows*. *The Curse of the Black Widow*,

The Scream of the Wolf and *The Turn of the Screw* formed a *Trilogy of Terror*. Who can ever forget the Vampire Barnabas Collins, the Zuni Fetish Doll, the Haunted Allardyce family home and The Norliss Tapes’ eerie occult investigations! Curtis frequently collaborated with sci-fi/horror writers Richard Matheson and William F. Nolan and featured stars such as Karen Black and Jack Palace in his macabre films. Never one to neglect the Classics, Curtis produced *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1968), *Dracula* (1973), *Frankenstein* (1973), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1973) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1974).



In a departure from his usual lurid endeavors, Curtis produced a semi-autobiographical film based on his childhood in Bridgeport entitled *When Every Day was the Fourth of July* and then produced and directed its sequel *The Long Days of Summer*. He also produced and directed miniseries of the two Herman Wouk novels,

The Winds of War (which was nominated for four Emmys) and *War and Remembrance* (which was nominated for 15 Emmys and won for best miniseries and special effects amongst others). When accepting his Emmy for Best Miniseries for *War and Remembrance*, he deadpanned that he’d “like to thank ABC for ponying up the dough to pay for this.”

The King of Television Horror died from a brain tumor on March 27, 2006 at his home in Brentwood, CA, just twenty days after the death of his wife Norma. Two daughters survived him.

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