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- [about](#)
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- [links](#)



by Christian Klusman

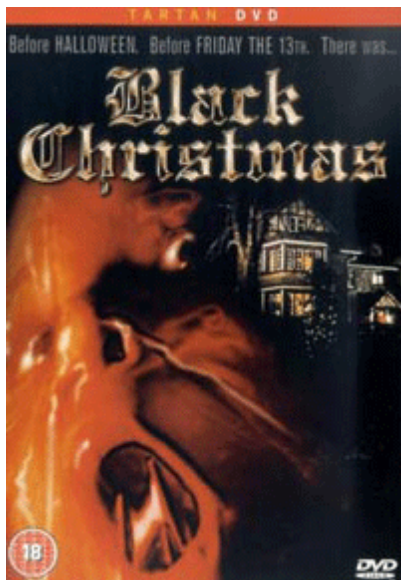


Director Robert Clark, probably best know for the classic holiday film *A Christmas Story* (1983), was killed along with his son in a car accident on Wednesday, April 5th, 2007. While as of this time all of the details have not been released, it appears that he and his son were the victims of a drunk driving accident. The other driver involved in the crash was under suspicion of DUI and apparently weaving into the wrong lane.

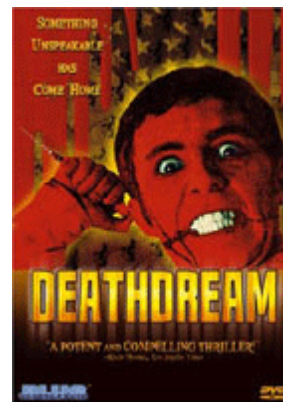
Despite classics such as *A Christmas Story* and blockbuster coming-of-age films like *Porky's* (1982) and *Porky's II: The Next Day* (1983), Clark started his career

mainly in the horror genre. He not only directed the classic *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* (1972) while working with frequent collaborator Alan Ormsby, but he also filmed the under-viewed classic *Deathdream, aka Dead of Night* (1974), one of the first films to allude to the horrors of the Vietnam War. Heavier than a standard living dead film

(not including the works of George Romero), *Deathdream* manages to symbolize the atrocities of the war through the zombified character of Andy, who is killed in Vietnam, but returns as a lifeless, soulless zombie.



Clark later made the classic horror film *Black Christmas* (1974), starring Olivia Hussey and Margot Kidder. It's unfair to classify *Black Christmas* as a typical slasher film, not only because it predates the slasher boom of the '80s by at least five years, but also because it's genuinely well-made, has good actors, and is actually scary. However, it was obviously an influential film for the hundreds of slasher films that would follow throughout the next decade and into the 90s.



Porky's, was a bit more risqué than Clark's other works (it primarily involves a bunch of '50s era high school boys trying to get laid), but it was a classic of its genre. *Porky's*, in addition to being a very sex-heavy film, also deals with issues such as racism, peer pressure, and the value of friendship. Despite its sleazy overtones (the film climaxes with the destruction of a whorehouse), it's a fun, and at times, a strangely touching film.



Of course, Clark will best be remembered for the holiday classic *A Christmas Story*. The film, while not a theatrical hit, has gone on to become a holiday classic to the point that some stations run it for 24-hour intervals on Christmas. It has become such an integral part of American culture that fishnet stocking leg lamps are now being sold in commercial stores. Despite an audience that largely has no familiarity with the time period it's based on, it remains a true Christmas classic.



Clark has worked consistently in film and television since the mid 60s, but sadly, his last completed film was *SuperBabies: Baby Geniuses 2* (2004). Despite this small misstep, Robert Clark was an accomplished filmmaker with many classics on his resume. He will be missed not only by genre fans, but by all fans of classic cinema.

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