



Film

Review: *The Man Nobody Knew*

Meet the documentarian's dad: legendary CIA director William Colby. *By David Fear*



Every son or daughter eventually attempts to discover who their parents are, or were, as people; for documentarian Carl Colby, digging into his late father's past was complicated by several factors. For starters, his dad was naturally a bit on the secretive side. During Carl's childhood, Pops could occasionally be intimidating and put up a bulldog front. Then there was the issue of national security—given that William Egan Colby was a key player in the OSS, served as chief of station in Saigon throughout the Vietnam War, and was the director of the CIA during the eras of Watergate and classified covert warfare programs.

Subtitled "In Search of My Father, CIA Spymaster William Colby" (rolls off the tongue, doesn't it?), Carl's doc bypasses the expected first-person detective work associated with such personal explorations. Instead, we get something far more interesting and vital: a tour of queasy, morally questionable intelligence endeavors over the last 50 years from the perspective of the spook community's

grand pooh-bah. Abundant where-did-they-find-that? archival clips run us through WWII, the '60s Phoenix Program, Nixon's dirty-tricks regime and more, with testimonies from political and military bigwigs (Donald Rumsfeld, Sen. Bob Kerrey, Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft) shedding light on the man by mulling over his contributions to history. The film occasionally skews a little on the PBS-dry side, but in terms of looking back on a legacy of American skullduggery and high-level shenanigans, its access and acknowledgment of our dark past make for one intimate indictment.

Follow David Fear on Twitter: [@davidlfear](https://twitter.com/davidlfear)