



When Dad's Working for the CIA: A Son's Portrait in *The Man Nobody Knew*

By **Aaron Hillis** *Wednesday, Sep 21 2011*

With a chewy title to tip us off, director Carl Colby's compelling and tricky portrait of his late pop streamlines and connects two vital relationships—one familial, the other between a man and his country. A former OSS officer who parachuted into Nazi terrain, the wiry and unassuming **William Colby** was a stealthy fella who rose to become director of the CIA, his influential legacy fraught with hand-dirtying operations in far-flung war zones. So why did the ultra-secretive creator of the Phoenix Program, a divisive **Vietnam** counter-insurgency scheme, get himself easily ousted for admitting to illegal intelligence operations in front of a Congressional committee in the mid-'70s? Was he really in the hot seat, or was he feeling morally conflicted? Colby the younger has his own ideas and agenda regarding his absentee dad (who mysteriously drowned many years later after divorcing and starting a new family), but he shrewdly keeps his voiceover to a succinct, dull roar. Instead, vintage photos and footage are paired with top-tier talking heads such as **Bob Woodward**, **Donald Rumsfeld**, a wide array of high-clearance personnel, even the filmmaker's mom. Respectful, loving, but never lionizing, Carl's thorough investigation transcends his personal catharsis to become an enduring treatise on how character flaws affect policy.