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Barry Me! CC Goldwater at home, with her grandfather's portrait.

The Goldwater Standard

A granddaughter sets the record straight

Your grandfather was a jerk!" CC Goldwater can't even guess the number of times strangers hit her with those words as she grew up. Sure, U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona was a lightning rod: a take-no-prisoners apostle of conservatism at a time when the United States seemed poised to make the 1960s the new golden age of liberalism. But, come on, a jerk?

"Well, I knew him as a grandfather—loving, caring, and really instilling in me the principle of being honest," she says. "I didn't even know his political platforms."

And so a few years ago, after almost two decades as a successful writer and PR executive, Goldwater hatched the notion of making a documentary about the late statesman—partly to explain him to others, partly to understand him herself. She plundered the family's photo albums and home movies; she scoured news archives for films of his speeches. The result, *Mr. Conservative*, airs September 18 on HBO, and if the film opens a lot of people's eyes about what Barry Goldwater was really like (and what he really stood for), those viewers will be no more astonished than his granddaughter was.

The senator distrusted fellow Republican Richard Nixon as a politician but was a close friend of President John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, against whom he expected to run in 1964. The two actually discussed flying around the country together during the presidential campaign, trading off speeches to make their cases.

Goldwater discovered as she made the film that her grandfather was full of surprises. "I got to know where he stood on civil rights [he championed civil rights in Arizona but opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because he thought it gave the federal government too much power]. I got to know where he stood on gays in the military ['Gays have served honorably since Julius Caesar'] and a woman's right to choose [he was against abortion but believed the government should stay out of the matter]."

In one clip, he even suggests that he might someday be considered a liberal.

"Originally, I just wanted to make this movie that would convince all those people that maybe he wasn't such a jerk," says Goldwater. "At the end of the film he says, 'I just want to be known as a guy who tried.' That's honest." — *Bill Newcott*