# Paula Colville uncovers mafia informant father’s secret life after DNA test



Paula Colville, a 60-year-old woman from Lochgelly, Fife, has uncovered a startling truth about her biological father: he was a mafia informant living under a witness protection program after collaborating with authorities to expose mob activities in New York during the 1960s. Colville's quest to learn more about her father began after the passing of her mother, Elizabeth, who had raised her as a single parent following a brief period working as an au pair in New York.

Elizabeth returned to Scotland after giving birth and maintained a veil of secrecy surrounding her daughter's father, often dismissing Paula's inquiries with statements such as it being "none of her business." Even threats of physical reprimands discouraged Paula from pursuing the matter further until her mother's death.

Upon losing Elizabeth, Paula turned to DNA testing in a bid to connect with her father's lineage. The results revealed American relatives, leading to the remarkable discovery that her father, Billy Elson Lawson, was deeply embedded in a life filled with danger and deception.

Paula recounted, “My dad was a mafia informant, which I find astonishing.” She elaborated that Lawson likely spent his life shrouded in secrecy to evade retribution from the mafia. During her search, she learned that Lawson had been helping law enforcement disclose mafia dealings.

His life took a treacherous turn after an assassination attempt, prompting him to enter a period of concealment. Following this, he navigated a complex personal life, characterised by two marriages in Texas and New Jersey before eventually settling in Arkansas. Remarkably, neither of his wives were aware of his previous identity or connections to organized crime.

Efforts to gather information from newly discovered relatives revealed that Lawson had resided in an apartment in New York that exploded, narrowly avoiding catastrophe as he was not home at the time. His relatives exhibited initial reluctance in discussing his past, but Paula persisted, uncovering vital details about his tumultuous life.

Paula's detective work included hiring a private investigator in New York, who was unable to locate Lawson, suggesting that he had effectively vanished after his military service in the U.S. Air Force. It was not until 2009 that Lawson passed away in Arkansas, still living under the alias "Why Wakeen."

In the wake of her discovery, Paula embraced her newly found family, which includes half-sisters Lisa and Cherie. She recently visited New Jersey to meet them, celebrating her 60th birthday with her extended family. Reflecting on her unexpected revelations, Paula stated, “I never thought for one minute that I would be lucky enough to find out who he was let alone get to know a wider family.”

Her story highlights the complexities of familial relationships amidst a backdrop of organised crime, reminiscent of narratives depicted in films like "The Godfather" and "Goodfellas." Amidst the historical context of mafia families such as the Gambinos and Genoveses, Paula’s experience serves as a testament to the far-reaching implications of a hidden past. As she continues to piece together her father's legacy, she has noted an extraordinary resemblance to him in old photographs, which adds an emotional layer to her journey of discovery.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_Teresa> - This article discusses the life of Vincent Teresa, a mafia informant who entered the Federal Witness Protection Program after exposing mob activities in the 1960s, paralleling the experiences of Paula Colville's father, Billy Elson Lawson.
* <https://www.history.com/topics/crime/witness-protection-program> - This page provides an overview of the U.S. Witness Protection Program, detailing its role in protecting individuals who have exposed organized crime, similar to the situation of Paula Colville's father.
* <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/14/us/14witness.html> - This article covers the life and death of a mafia informant who lived under an alias in Arkansas, drawing parallels to the life of Paula Colville's father, Billy Elson Lawson.
* <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mafia-informant-who-lived-under-alias-in-arkansas-dies/> - This news report details the death of a mafia informant who had been living under an alias in Arkansas, similar to the circumstances of Paula Colville's father.
* <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/14/us/14witness.html> - This article discusses the life and death of a mafia informant who lived under an alias in Arkansas, drawing parallels to the life of Paula Colville's father, Billy Elson Lawson.
* <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mafia-informant-who-lived-under-alias-in-arkansas-dies/> - This news report details the death of a mafia informant who had been living under an alias in Arkansas, similar to the circumstances of Paula Colville's father.
* <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scots-woman-discovers-dad-mafia-35169168> - Please view link - unable to able to access data