



## THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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# Filmmaker wants release of research on missing vet

By JAMES ADAMS

*Emmy winner's work with soldier possibly stranded in Vietnam is controversial, but festival plans to screen it*

The Edmonton-based, Emmy-winning filmmaker of a controversial documentary about a U.S. soldier said to have been stranded in Vietnam since mid-1968 wants the U.S. government to release to the man's family all the research it claims to have done on the soldier's identity since at least 1991.

Michael Jorgensen was responding in a telephone interview on Wednesday evening in response to recent reports that John Hartley Robertson, who is featured in his film, *Unclaimed*, is in fact a mixed-race Asian named Dang Tan Ngoc – not the Alabama-born Green Beret who was left for dead on a mountain in Laos after a top-secret but ultimately disastrous helicopter rescue mission.

*Unclaimed*, which traces the efforts of another Vietnam War veteran, Tom Faunce of Michigan, to find and identify the real Mr. Robertson, had its world premiere earlier this week at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto. Screenings are scheduled for Thursday and Saturday, then it moves to Washington, D.C., for its U.S. debut on May 12 at the G.I. Film Festival.

Mr. Jorgensen said there is evidence that the U.S. government undertook investigations in 1991, 2001, 2003 and again in 2006 and 2009. "Why was the family never involved?" he asked. For example, according to the website Professional Soldiers, which is run by current and former Green Berets, U.S. missionaries took hair samples from the man who is said to be Mr. Robertson in February, 2009, and passed them on to lab technicians for DNA comparison with "family reference samples" obtained earlier by the U.S. military. These tests determined there was no match.

However, Mr. Jorgensen said, none of Mr. Robertson's immediate family – three sisters and one brother, only one of whom, an 80-year-old sister, is still alive – ever recalled providing such samples. The division of the U.S. military that investigates the cases of missing members of forces has not "even reached out to them as of today and said, 'Here's all that we did.'" In the film, Mr. Faunce has an enamel isotope test done on one of Mr. Robertson's molars that indicates he was raised in the United States.

The surviving sibling, Jean Robertson-Holley, is convinced the man in Vietnam is her long-lost brother, even though he speaks mainly Vietnamese, as does her daughter, Gail Metcalf.

*Unclaimed's* climax is a tear-filled reunion in Canada of Ms. Robertson-Holley and the man she believes is her

brother. (Mr. Robertson – or Dang Tan Ngoc – is back in Vietnam, with the Vietnamese woman he says he married after she nursed him back to health following the mission.)

"If he's a fraud, I'm not sure how he convinced his family and a guy he served with that he's somebody he's not by his physical appearance and the information that he knows," Mr. Jorgensen said. In a Facebook posting last week, Mr. Jorgensen wrote: "The film was not produced to help perpetrate fraud of any kind or misrepresent anyone's identity."

Representatives for both Hot Docs and the G.I. festival said Wednesday they will not pull *Unclaimed*. The Washington event will issue a statement informing the audience about "the objections to the film and its content." Hot Docs said it selected *Unclaimed* because of its ambiguity and complexity. "We trust our audiences will approach the film with open minds."

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