

# Los Angeles Times

## Review: 'Unclaimed' believes Vietnam man's claim he's an MIA American

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May 1, 2014, 6:05 p.m.

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Vietnam War veteran Tom Faunce walks through Arlington National Cemetery to visit the 'ghosts of fallen soldiers' he can't forget. He's inspired to seek the true identity of a man claiming to be an American MIA still living in Vietnam. His emotional journey is chronicled in "Unclaimed."

At the center of the documentary "Unclaimed" is the mystery shrouding the identity of one man: a 76-year-old living in Vietnam known as Dang Tan Ngoc, who professes to be Special Forces soldier John Hartley Robertson, missing since a 1968 helicopter crash in Laos. The film follows Vietnam veteran and Christian missionary Tom Faunce's personal crusade to verify the man's claims and unite him with the Robertson family.

The film made national headlines a year ago when festival engagements prompted the Defense Department to issue a statement declaring the man in question to be a fraud. Filmmaker Michael Jorgensen not only downplays the controversy by eschewing serious investigative work and interviews with military or government officials, but also overtly recasts it as a harum-scarum Kafkaesque conspiracy theory onscreen and in publicity material supplied to the press.

Ngoc and Faunce certainly make fascinating subjects, and the film persuasively argues to give them the benefit of the doubt. But one can't help but think that in the hands of a shrewder filmmaker like Errol Morris, this stranger-than-fiction account would have been absolutely riveting.

Instead, Jorgensen gives us stilted voice-over narration delivered by Faunce to accompany his seemingly staged visit to the Arlington National Cemetery, all set to the tune of Mike Shields' plaintive score. The filmmaker can't make it more obvious whose story he buys.

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"Unclaimed"

**MPAA rating:** None

**Running time:** 1 hour, 17 minutes

**Playing:** At Laemmle's Music Hall 3, Beverly Hills.