

## Movies

# In *Unclaimed*, a U.S. Soldier KIA in Vietnam Reappears -- or Does He?

By **Chris Packham** *Wednesday, Apr 30 2014*

The Vietnamese national who identifies himself as [John Hartley Robertson](#), an American soldier reported KIA in 1976, has a number of strikes against his claim: He has no memory of the helicopter crash after which he disappeared; he misreports his birthdate and details of his military career; and the most difficult argument against the possibility that he is a forgotten U.S. soldier is that he speaks no English.

*Unclaimed* documents the efforts of a [Vietnam](#) veteran and Christian missionary named [Tom Faunce](#) to establish the truth of the man's origin, and to persuade the [U.S. Joint Personnel Recovery Agency](#), a notoriously mismanaged bureaucracy, to assist in his identification.

While also recounting Faunce's own troubled childhood and his difficult readjustment to civilian life after his service in Vietnam, *Unclaimed* makes a pretty strong argument that Robertson, a medic assigned to the clandestine MACV-SOG unit that made illegal incursions into [Cambodia](#), survived a helicopter crash in [Laos](#) and five years of imprisonment by the Vietcong.

But it's also a nakedly manipulative film, intercutting missionary Faunce's history with shots of a ludicrously glum and silent family dinner, and indulging in some treachy sad-face piano music. Faunce and his family are 100 percent bullshit-free, but the film still can't stop fumbling with your emotional bra straps. And also with basic English composition, judging by one caption card's egregious dangling modifier.

But the man who might be Robertson is both the point and the best part of the film. He comes across as sincere, his childlike vulnerability and the depiction of his life in Vietnam demanding sympathy.

Opening May 2, 2014 at

**Quad Cinema**

*Operating for over 40 years, Quad Cinema has become a cinematic institution of Greenwich Village. It screens a variety of independent and foreign films in four theaters.*