



Sunday, January 4, 2009



- [Home](#)
- [Click for Important Links](#)
- [Gulf Coast Classified](#)
- [Search Ads](#)
- [Announcements](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Yard Sales](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [AlabamaLegals.com](#)
- [Medical Directory](#)
- [GulfCoastAutoGuide.com](#)
- [Share Your Photos](#)
- [GulfCoastPhotosNow.com](#)
- [News](#)
- [Search News Archives](#)
- [Local News](#)
- [Politics and Elections](#)
- [Business News](#)
- [Arts & Entertainment](#)
- [Religion News](#)
- [School News](#)
- [Real Estate News](#)
- [Automotive News](#)
- [Editorials & Letters](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Police Reports](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Births](#)
- [Engagements](#)
- [Weddings](#)
- [Anniversaries](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Sports Calendar](#)
- [Summer Activities](#)
- [Calendar of Events](#)
- [Special Publications](#)
- [Church Directories](#)
- [Specialties](#)
- [FIND IT NOW Directory](#)
- [Chambers of Commerce](#)
- [Volunteering - Community Service](#)
- [Cooking](#)
- [Health & Well-Being](#)
- [Horoscopes](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Circulation - Subscribe](#)
- [Employment Opportunities](#)
- [Submission Forms](#)
- [Letter to the Editor](#)
- [Press Release](#)
- [Story Ideas](#)
- [Birth Announcement](#)
- [Wedding Announcement](#)
- [Engagement Announcement](#)

**Local News**

## Veteran of the Year

*Fass focused on helping comrades*

**By Mike Odom  
Staff Writer**

(Created: Saturday, November 8, 2008 8:05 AM CST)

[More Local News](#)

TT + | Text Size | - TT | Comment | [Print this story](#) | [Email this story](#) | [Letter to the Editor](#)

FAIRHOPE, Ala. — While most people snoozed at 4:30 a.m. Thursday, Bob Fass drove to Pensacola, a trip he has made many times the past few years as district service officer for the South Alabama office of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He was on his way to meet with wounded veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I don't care about medals," Fass said. "There are a lot of guys who got wounded and never got a Purple Heart."

What Fass does care about is helping local veterans get the benefits their military service has earned them from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

His commitment to that work resulted in his being named this year's "Veteran of the Year" in Fairhope.

"Bob is a great asset to local veterans," said Joe Birindelli, a main organizer for today's Veteran's Day Parade.

"Fairhope is fortunate to have such an unsung hero as this year's Veteran of the Year."

Fass, 64, is a retired Army Special Forces major who moved to Fairhope and became active in the local VFW post.

The garage of his Fairhope house is a vivid testament to his tours of duty in Vietnam, with pictures of his fellow soldiers, maps of where he served, a handwritten letter from Gen. William Westmoreland, and walls and bookshelves filled with other evidence of his years of service.

"Bob's service did not end with retirement," Birindelli



Bob Fass served three and a half tours of duty in Vietnam with the Army Special Forces. During his service, he was shot through hand and leg, bayoneted in leg, and received shrapnel in his face, receiving four Purple Hearts, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star and the Bronze Star of Valor. His garage is filled with memorabilia from those years, including an Associated Press newspaper clipping from 1966 that shows him helping an injured Vietnamese child during the Vietnam War. Staff photo by Mike Odom.



**Calendar Of Events**

January 2009						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- [Anniversary](#)
- [Announcement](#)
- [Our Staff](#)**
- [Management](#)
- [BaldwinCountyNOW.com](#)
- [Baldwin Times](#)
- [Daphne Bulletin](#)
- [Elberta-Lillian Ledger](#)
- [Fairhope Courier](#)
- [Foley Onlooker](#)
- [Gulf Shores Islander](#)
- [Robertsdale Independent](#)
- [Spanish Fort Sun](#)

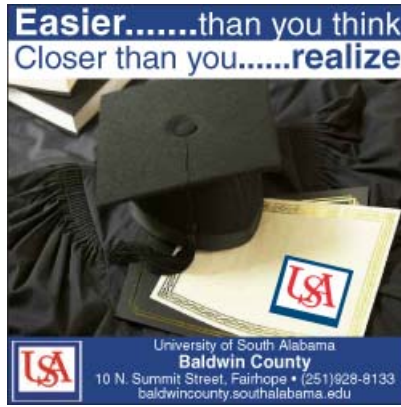
**Sponsored by:**

**Alabama  
Featured Adoptable  
Pet:**



Annie  
Baldwin Animal Rescue  
Center  
Fairhope, Alabama  
compliments of  
Petfinder.com

said. "Bob has spent 20 years in volunteer service to other veterans and is handling over 700 cases for veterans who have filed disability claims with the VA. His selfless service helps World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan veterans obtain the services they have earned in service to our country."



Fass said veterans must take an active role in securing their military benefits, and it's not always the first thing on their mind when they get home.

"Three out of five vets coming home now have some kind of post-traumatic stress and they don't always want to deal with it," he said. "But every vet has got to get into the VA system."

He said that initial work of registering with the VA is crucial to prove benefits regarding conditions that might only surface years later.

"Often those wounds will get worse, and you will need proof," he said. "The VA does only minimal work at the start. It's 99 percent up to the veterans."

Much of Fass' work is helping veterans navigate the VA bureaucracy and deal with the paperwork. He also says the demands on the system make the work more difficult and understanding what to do and get it done becomes even more important.

"The Montgomery VA does a fantastic job," he said. "But they can only handle about 1,500 claims a month but they're getting between 2,800-3,500."

Around 2003, Fass was asked by the local VFW to start helping local veterans when he moved to Fairhope from New York. He was qualified in helping veterans and opened an office at the local post, serving in a volunteer capacity but with long hours.

He not only helps veterans but also their families.

"We help obtain dependent claims for wives of guys who have passed away so they can get benefits and the kids get college tuition," he said. "There's 100 different forms to fill out."

When Fass leaves the house on his trips to Pensacola and the local VFW Post 5660, he wears an MIA bracelet honoring a friend, Mike Milner, who has been missing in action since 1967.

"We were on the same patrol," he said, referring to when they got "slammed" by North Vietnamese soldiers, the last time he saw his friend. "I wear it when I go out."

On Friday, Fass got another call that he was needed in Pensacola to meet with some more returning soldiers who live in his district.

"Local veterans need to know if they have a problem to give me a call," he said before he left.

VFW South Alabama District Service Officer Bob Fass can be reached at the VFW Post 5660 at (251) 928-8259.

**Reader Feedback**

There are **1 comment(s)** comments on this story:

**thesarus** wrote on **Nov 8, 2008 7:24 PM:**  
" veterans need all the help they can get. did you know about a third of all the homeless are veterans? its a disgrace. "

[Report Abuse](#)

**Feedback Rules**

- Do not issue threats of any kind.
- Do not use profanity or attempt to disguise profanity.
- Do not post messages using profane or crude names and identities.
- Do not insult someone else's contributions or wit.
- Do not disguise or confuse identities by using the names of others.

*The opinions expressed in reader-posted comments are not necessarily the opinions of Baldwincountynow.com, Gulf Coast Newspapers or its newspapers and staffs. Baldwincountynow.com, Gulf Coast Newspapers and its newspapers and staffs do not endorse or guarantee the accuracy of any reader-posted comment. Responsibility for what is posted lies with each user.*

**Add Your Comments**

**To add your comments you must be registered and logged in**

**Registered Users Sign in Here**

**\*Member ID:**

**\*Password:**

Remember login?   
(requires cookies)

**Become a Registered User**

**Do not use usernames or passwords from your financial accounts!**

**Note: Fields marked with an asterisk (\*) are required!**

**\*Create a Member ID:**

**\*Choose a password:**

**\*Re-enter password:**

**\*E-mail Address:**

**\*Year of Birth:**   
(children under 13 cannot register)

**\*First Name:**

**\*Last Name:**

**Home Phone:**

**Business Phone:**

**\*Address:**


**\*City:**

**\*State:**

**\*Zip Code:**

All comments must be approved by Gulf Coast Newspapers before posting to the Web site.

*The opinions expressed in reader-posted comments are not necessarily the opinions of Baldwincountynow.com, Gulf Coast Newspapers or its newspapers and staffs. Baldwincountynow.com, Gulf Coast Newspapers and its newspapers and staffs do not endorse or guarantee the accuracy of any reader-posted comment. Responsibility for what is posted lies with each user.*

Return to Local News: [Local News](#) | [Print this story](#) | [Email this story](#) |  [Letter to the Editor](#)

( [top](#) )

Copyright © 2009 BaldwinCountyNOW.com, All Rights Reserved.

[Privacy Policy](#)