

Marine receives nation's highest honor

1st MLG Marine watches as Sgt. Dakota Meyer awarded MoH

Story by
 Cpl. Khoa Pelczar
 Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. – When Sgt. Dakota Meyer, former Marine scout sniper, now a construction worker, was awarded the nation's highest honor, his teammates were there to personally congratulate him.

One of his teammates, Staff Sgt. Jason A. Richards, heavy equipment chief, Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, who deployed with Meyer, attended the ceremony to show his support and watch the President award Meyer.

"It was an honor to be there," said Richards, 34, from Marion, Ind. "They recognized our fallen teammates and the other Marines that were there that day. It was a good ceremony, very professional."

Richards added, "Seeing the President put the Medal of Honor on his neck, I couldn't be more proud. Also it felt good to have some of the old

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Photo by Lance Cpl. Daniel A. Wetzel

President Barack Obama awards Sgt. Dakota Meyer the Medal of Honor Sept. 15, 2011. Meyer is the first living Marine recipient of the Medal of Honor for actions in Iraq or Afghanistan. He and his family and friends gathered at the White House to commemorate his selfless service.



Citizens of Oceanside interact with a static display by Marines and sailors with 1st Marine Logistics Group in Oceanside, Calif., during the annual Harbor Days celebration, Sept. 25. The display allowed the visitors to learn about the equipment service members use overseas.

Harbor Days

Marines, sailors showcase gear

Story and photos by
 Pfc. Timothy Childers
 Staff Writer

OCEANSIDE, Calif. – Every year the citizens of Oceanside celebrate with food, craft exhibits, and static displays during an event called Harbor Days. Among the many attractions at the two-day festival from Sept. 24 - 25, Marines and sailors displayed some of the

equipment they use overseas. Marines and sailors with 1st Marine Logistics Group presented a static display during the celebration, showing off a Forward Resuscitative Surgical Suite, which is used stabilize injured service members near the frontlines.

In addition, Marines also

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displayed a Humvee, two 7-ton supply trucks, and even the contents of a Meal Ready to Eat.

The harbor is shared by both service members of Camp Pendleton and the citizens of Oceanside. It is important for the service members to display the equipment they use to the public, allowing the people of Oceanside to learn more about their neighbors at Camp Pendleton, said Jim Wood, mayor of Oceanside.

Throughout the day, many people asked questions about the trucks, the FRSS, and even about the MREs.

"I've displayed vehicles here a couple of times and there are always people interested in what the military does," said Cpl. Ramiro Saucedo, military policeman, Military Police Company, Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st Marine Logistics Group, "I'm glad I could come out here and show them just a sample of the equipment we use out in the

field."

Many of the visitors to the display said they were very grateful that the Marines and sailors shared their time to display the equipment.

"It's good for the kids to see the equipment that's actually used in the military," said Glen Sincera, a retired Army soldier.

Even the mayor displayed his appreciation for the display by stopping by and talking with the service members.

Wood said he talks with the Marines and sailors every year and learns a lot from them.

"The service members are my heroes," said Wood. "I come over here to thank them for their service."

"Not only did we get to share our knowledge about the equipment to the public, setting up the FRSS allowed the corpsmen to get some training too," said Petty Officer 1st Class Richard L. McFarland, senior medical expert, Surgical Company B, CLR-15, 1st MLG.

Constructing an operational FRSS in the early morning hours gave the

sailors a chance to refresh their abilities and set up at a moment's notice.

The static display set up by both the Marines and sailors from 1st MLG proved to be a crowd pleaser to the citizens of Oceanside during the Harbor Days event. Not only was the public educated about the equipment service members use overseas, but the Marines and sailors were given a chance to test their own knowledge by answering the countless questions by the public and by constructing a fully operational FRSS.



(Above) Children sit behind the wheel of a 7-ton truck during Oceanside Harbor Days, Sept. 25. (Left) Sailors display the Forward Resuscitative Surgical Suite in Oceanside, Calif., Sept. 25.



A Boy Scout pretends to be a Marine as he mans the turret of a Humvee in Oceanside, Calif., Sept. 25. The Humvee was part of a static display set up by service members during the annual Harbor Days event.

HAPPENINGS

Water Purification Rodeo

Five Marines with Utilities Platoon, Engineer Maintenance Company 1st Maintenance Bn., recently placed fourth in the Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit Rodeo. This was the first time a west coast Marine Corps team competed in the ROWPU Rodeo.

Dirt Days 2

Dirt Days 2 is an off-road motorcycle and ATV training event at Thunder Horse Ranch Oct. 1. Dependents and family members may participate in the event, but must complete the basic dirt bike course/ ATV course prior to participating. Registration POC is HM1 Lease, email todd.g.lease@usmc.mil.

Free Country Concert

Country stars Kellie Pickler and Casey James will perform in a concert at the Pacific Views South Mesa Club, Oct. 7. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and concert starts at 7:30 p.m. This event is free to authorized military patrons. Tickets available for non military personnel. For more information call 760-724-5496.

Chronic Cantina Grand Opening

The Chronic Cantina will feature live music, food and drink specials from 2-8 p.m., Oct. 8. "Jackass" celebrity Wee-Man will be in attendance. The event will be located in the 22 Area.

Leatherneck Field Meet

A field competition will be held at the 11 Area Field from 7:30 a.m. - 3 p.m., Oct. 26. The Men's division will feature 10-member teams and the women's division will include 5-member teams. For more information, call 760-725-6614.



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Photo by Cpl. Austin Hazard

Sgt. Dakota Meyer, the first living Marine Medal of Honor recipient since the Vietnam War, stands on Center Walk with Gen. James F. Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, before being presented with his official Medal of Honor flag at Marine Barracks Washington Sept. 16, 2011. Meyer was presented the Medal of Honor by President Barack Obama the previous day.

MEDAL

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team back together again ... It would've been nicer if everyone could have made it."

According to his citation, Meyer, 23, from Greenburg, Ky., was recognized for heroic actions while deployed to Kunar province, Afghanistan, Sept. 8, 2009. Meyer, a corporal at the time, risked his life by charging into a dangerous area, riddled by enemy fire, time and time again in order to retrieve the remains of his fallen comrades, saving the lives of 13 Marines and Army soldiers, along with 23 Afghan soldiers.

For that heroic act of selflessness, President Barack Obama awarded Meyer the Medal of Honor at a ceremony in the White House, Sept. 15. Meyer, now in the Marine reserves working in construction, became the first living Marine to receive the

award since the Vietnam War.

"We're extraordinarily proud of Sgt. Dakota Meyer," said Obama. "Today is only the third time during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that a recipient of the Medal of Honor has been able to accept it in person."

For two years, Meyer blamed himself for not rushing in early enough to save everyone's life, Obama explained to guests, before turning to Meyer.

"Dakota, I know you've grappled with the grief of that day, that you said your efforts were somehow a failure because your teammates didn't come home," Obama said to Meyer during the ceremony. "But as your Commander-in-Chief and on behalf of everyone here today and all Americans, I want you to know it's quite the opposite."

Meyer said he did what any other Marine would have done.

"It's a mixture between our training and morals," he told a local tele-

vision station. "My brothers were in there, and you don't leave anyone behind ... There's not a time that I thought they would all be dead when I got in there, but that's just how it happened."

Looking back to that day, Richards said he is very proud of his teammate, Meyer, for what he did to recover those who sacrificed their lives.

"I'm glad he got recognized for it," Richards said. "There were a lot of Americans and Afghans in there that day and what he did saved those lives."

Meyer said he was honored to receive the Medal of Honor, but he wanted to dedicate the award to the lives that were lost that day.

"It's a great honor getting the Medal of Honor, but it's not for me," Meyer told a reporter. "It's for them, the Marine Corps, the Marines that are serving and the Marines that will serve."

During the ceremony, Obama

took time to pay tribute to Meyer's fallen comrades.

"Dakota says he'll accept this medal in their name," said Obama. "So today, we remember the husband who loved the outdoors, Lt. Michael Johnson; the husband and father they called 'Gunny J' – Gunner Sgt. Edwin Johnson; the determined Marine who fought to get on that team, Staff Sgt. Aaron Kenefick; the medic who gave his life tending to his teammates, Hospitalman [Petty Officer] Third Class James Layton; and a soldier wounded in that battle who never recovered, Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Westbrook."

As a Medal of Honor recipient, Meyer was inducted into the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes, Sept. 16. Yet, he remains humble and continues to work as a construction worker. He wears a metal bracelet in honor of those who made the ultimate sacrifice that day, for the Marine Corps and for American freedom.

"Sergeant Meyer embodies all that is good about our nation's Corps of Marines," said Gen. James F. Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, in a message to all Marines. "He is a living example of the brave young men and women whose service, fidelity and sacrifice make us so proud. [His] heroic actions on Sept. 8, 2009 in the Ganjgal village, Afghanistan serve as an inspiration to all Marines and will forever be etched in our Corps' rich legacy of courage and valor."



Photo by Cpl. Khoa Pelczar

Staff Sgt. Jason A. Richards



RE-LIVING THE LEGACY

7th Engineer Support Battalion

Story by
Sgt. Shannon McMillan
Staff Writer

It was August 1966 when 2nd Lt. Andrew J. Blenkle, from New Jersey, first landed at the foothills of Da Nang, Vietnam, ready to overcome the challenges of deployment.

It was Blenkle's first deployment, and also the first deployment for 7th Engineer Battalion. A year earlier, on Aug. 6, 1965, the battalion departed the United States to land on foreign soil in Da Nang, placing a historical marker for the unit, according to the unit's historical records.

As the platoon commander for 3rd Platoon, Company D, 7th Engineer Battalion, Blenkle was in charge of overseeing the construction of Liberty Road between the villages of Da Nang and An Hoa, the only route that was available to service members and local residents, said Blenkle.

"Being open did not mean that Liberty Road was safe for travel," wrote James R. Kelley in the book *Casting Alpha: Antracs in Vietnam*. "Snipers, booby traps and land mines were hazards that could not be avoided so civilians did not travel on Liberty Road."

"I often asked myself, why [the Viet Cong] didn't assault us on the road," said Blenkle, retired colonel, 67, who currently resides in Mission Viejo, Calif. "It was rough, it was really rough."

Due to the terrain, Blenkle explained that although infantry would provide security a mile out while the engineers worked on the road, he would bring his entire platoon out to provide security as well, sometimes encountering traps set by the enemy.

"I had a kid (who was posted at an observation post), and as I was walking in a direction, the kid said, 'don't go there, sir.' I asked him why, and he said, 'We think there's a booby trap there,'" Blenkle recalled while chuckling. "I just told him to keep everyone away until we were finished with business, and at the end of the day we went over there and, sure enough, there was one. I just said to the Marines, 'Okay, let's take care of it.'"



Photo by Roger Marach

Marines from 7th Engineer Support Battalion pave a road in Vietnam.

Blenkle left Vietnam unscathed, but a friend of his – an infantryman with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, who provided security as the Marines worked on Liberty Road – wasn't so lucky.

"He was coming out with the sweep team ... and they got wiped out in an ambush," said Blenkle, who remembered the day like it was yesterday. "There was only one survivor out of 13 to 15 guys killed, and that was the same road we were working on, and it was the same road we had opened..."

Road construction is just one facet of the unit's mission. For the past 60 years, the unit known today as 7th Engineer Support Battalion has provided service members, civilians and international citizens with mobility, shelter and quality of life enhancements.

According to the lineage of 7th ESB, the unit was activated as 7th Engineer Battalion, Sept. 29, 1950, at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

The battalion originally consisted of Headquarters, Service, A, B, C and D companies with a Fixed Bridge Platoon and an attached Floating Bridge Platoon.

7th Engineer Battalion was reassigned to 1st Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, Oct. 25, 1955.

The battalion participated in the Vietnam War from August 1965 until 1970, when they were reassigned

to 5th Marine Amphibious Brigade, Fleet Marine Force, according to historical records. In 1971, the unit was reassigned once more to 1st Marine Division.

The unit was re-designated in March 1976 as the 7th Engineer Support Battalion and was reassigned to 1st Force Service Support Group, currently known as 1st Marine Logistics Group. Shortly after being renamed, Bulk Fuel Company was added to 7th ESB for unit support.

In August 1990, Company B and elements of Company C began deploying in support of Operation Desert Shield to Saudi Arabia and returned to the United States April 24, 1991.

In December 1992, 7th ESB deployed to Somalia in support of Operation Restore Hope, where they were confined to the port of Mogadishu and focused on maintaining engineering services, bulk fuel and utility operations, and maintaining road repair, route sweeping, and airfields, according to historical records.

7th ESB has also supported Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

The battalion is currently comprised of three line companies (A, B, C), Support Company, Bulk Fuel Company, Headquarters and Service Company, and 1st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company.

In addition to supporting combat operations, the unit has also supported the local community.

The battalion's skills proved useful in 1957 when the battalion was requested to expand the Santa Margarita River, a river on the Pacific Coast of southern California, due to flood conditions. The service members constructed a bridge with two support beams, which was the longest M-6 Bridge ever created at the time.

From 1951-1954, the battalion not only conducted annual training exercises amongst the companies but also constructed and completed minor projects around Camp Pendleton such as rehabilitations of mess halls and active duty clubs.

In 1975, when refugees arrived to the United States from South Vietnam seeking shelter, the battalion constructed tents, mess halls and drain fields to house the group.

In 1978, Camp Pendleton was heavily hit by rain which resulted in damage to the base roads, bridges, ranges and rodeo grounds. Through the combined efforts of 7th ESB and 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, M-6 bridges were erected, support structures for a water main were built and the base rodeo grounds were repaired in time for the annual Camp Pendleton Rodeo, according to historical records.

Today, the battalion continues to provide support in the Global War on Terror and is currently deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan in support of International Security Assistance Force operations.

"The missions the engineers were doing in Afghanistan and Iraq are essentially the same type of missions we were doing (in Vietnam), but with new and better technology," said Blenkle.

While looking back to his deployment more than 45 years ago, the retired Marine summed it up with a few words that apply across generational boundaries: "They were a great bunch of guys; they had my back and I had theirs."

Semper Ride takes over the runway

Story and photos by
Pfc. Timothy Childers
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.

The sound of screaming motorcycles, the smell of burnt rubber, and the sight of dozens of motorcycles cornering sharp turns filled the runway here, Sept. 25, as service members and civilians participated in the Semper Ride Fun Day on the Runway.

Semper Ride is a partnership created to prevent motorcycle incidents by educating Marines on proper riding techniques and personal protective equipment. The organization planned an event where both families and riders could have both an educational experience and a lot of fun on the runway.

The event featured many attractions. There was a freestyle demonstration in which professional athletes performed stunts on their motorbikes. A showing of the Semper Ride movie, motorcycle total control clinics, and exhibitors selling PPE and motorcycles were also added to the list of offerings.

Additionally, a track day on the runway where service members were given a chance to learn new skills and hone old ones under the security of a closed course and safety personnel was provided for service members.

The track day course allowed motorcyclists to receive coaching and practice correct turning techniques along a winding path filled with tight corners similar to what they might find on the streets of California.

The course was designed not as

a race track but as a road course where the riders could practice real-world speeds and skills they've developed on a closed track, said Wally S. Trevains, deputy operations manager for Cape Fox Professional Services.

"The course is an outlet for the riders to refine their skills in a controlled environment," said Trevains.

Riding coaches, control riders, and track safety personnel allowed the riders to practice without the hazards of the open road. It also helped struggling riders to get one-on-one coaching from a trained professional.

"The course is a great and safe setting that a lot of [service members] can benefit from," said Gunnery Sgt. Lewis Green, programs chief, Brig Company, Security Battalion, 1st Marine Division.

The track day featured courses for all levels of riders in order for both beginners and advanced riders to gain from the training and practice.

"It's perfect for any Marine to improve their road skills," said Cpl. Timothy R. Santes, ground radio repairman, Communications Company, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, "It's free, convenient, great practice, and a lot of fun for riders."

Santes recommends all riders take one of the track courses to improve their skills.



A freestyle athlete performs a stunt during the Semper Ride Fun Day on the Runway event at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Sept. 25.

From the track day, the riders can now take the experience they gained and the lessons learned from the course to the streets as more confident and skilled motorcyclists.

Semper Ride plans on having more events in Camp Pendleton, all of which can be found on its Web site at www.semperide.com.

The next upcoming event is the Dirt Days Offroad Training at Thunder Horse Ranch from Sept. 30 – Oct. 1.



A freestyle athlete performs a stunt during the Semper Ride Fun Day on the Runway event at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Sept. 25. Semper Ride is a partnership created to prevent motorcycle incidents in the corps by educating Marines on proper riding techniques and personal protective equipment.



A motorcycle safety coach instructs a service member participating in the track day at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Sept. 25. The track day was part of the Semper Ride Fun Day on the Runway event in which Marines and sailors practiced their riding skills.

CLR-17 NCOs run on motivation



Noncommissioned officers with Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st Marine Logistics Group, participate in a regimental run aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., Sept. 16. The run was held to build camaraderie and teamwork among the NCOs in the regiment.

**Story and photos by
Pfc. Timothy Childers
Staff Writer**

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – “Double-time!” yells the sergeant standing in front of the company. “Marine Corps!” erupts from the entire company in an ominous roar.

Dawn breaks over the horizon as the regiment begins to run off the 13 Area football field in formation, shouting motivation from the top of their lungs. The regimental sergeant major leads the group through the fresh-dewed grass, beginning the run.

Noncommissioned officers with Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st Marine Logistics Group, participated in an NCO regimental run here, Sept. 16. The run was held to build camaraderie and teamwork among the NCOs.

The motivation was palpable as the regiment came thundering down the road, screaming at the top of their lungs.

“These runs are not specifically about the [physical training]; they’re about the camaraderie,” said Sgt. Maj. Ledferd, regimental sergeant major, CLR-17, 1st MLG. “Whether you like it or not, we’re all a part of the same family. We are all one team, one fight.”

Having almost all of the NCOs present for the run presented the opportunity for Ledferd to address everyone at the same time.

Ledferd, from Louisville Kent., said he also organized the run to commu-

nicate his expectations of the Marines as leaders.

The regiment is a working body, with his NCOs as the backbone holding it all together, Ledferd said. He emphasized his wishes to increase the regiment’s communication throughout this “body.”

The body is useless if the officers, “the brain,” are not able to pass information through the backbone to their junior Marines, as he referred to them as the “arms and limbs,” explained Ledferd.

During the run, each company competed amongst each other for motivation.

“Motivation is contagious. During the run we competed on which company was the loudest while singing cadence,” said Sgt. Able Graciano, platoon leader, Supply Platoon, Headquarters Company, CLR-17, 1st MLG.

The event also gave the chance for NCOs to practice calling cadence. Many Marines don’t have the luxury to show motivation during unit PT sessions, said Sgt. Mihai V. Psederski, comptroller, G-8, HQ Company, CLR-17, 1st MLG.

“The run went great,” said Ledferd after dismissing the regiment. He added that he plans to do the same run with his junior Marines, to get one-on-one time with them. The junior Marine regimental run is scheduled for Oct. 18 at 6:30 a.m. beginning at the Paige Field track.



Noncommissioned officers with Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st Marine Logistics Group, participate in a regimental run aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., Sept. 16. The run was held to build camaraderie and teamwork among the NCOs in the regiment.

Car Buying 101:

What you need to know when buying a car

Story by
Lance Cpl. Jerrick Griffin
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON Calif. – I recently attended a Car Buying 101 class at the 24 Area Landing Zone, where I spoke with two car-buying experts with Pacific Marine Credit Union.

During the class, the experts – former car salesmen – spoke about how to buy a car the right way, scams car salesmen use to lure you into buying an overpriced car, and various resources you can use to help buy that dream vehicle you've been eyeballing.

One of the biggest mistakes a person can make when buying a car is to walk onto a car lot totally unprepared. You see rows and rows of shiny new vehicles, just waiting to be taken for a test drive.

What's wrong with the above scenario? The first thing is that you 'dropped by' the car lot unprepared. 'Dropping by' a dealership is when a person has no intention

of purchasing a vehicle, but somehow gets roped into signing a contract through flashy gimmicks, such as ads promising "zero percent interest" and "rebates," which may end up costing more, not less.

"The worst way is to drop by the dealership because the place will spend an average of \$600 to get you to come on that lot and they will not be inclined to let you leave without you making the decision to buy a car," said Camo Gliesberg, a Pacific Marine Credit Union representative and former car salesman, from Oceanside, Calif.

Gliesberg recommends making an appointment and never "dropping by" a dealership unprepared. But it's important to do plenty of research first.

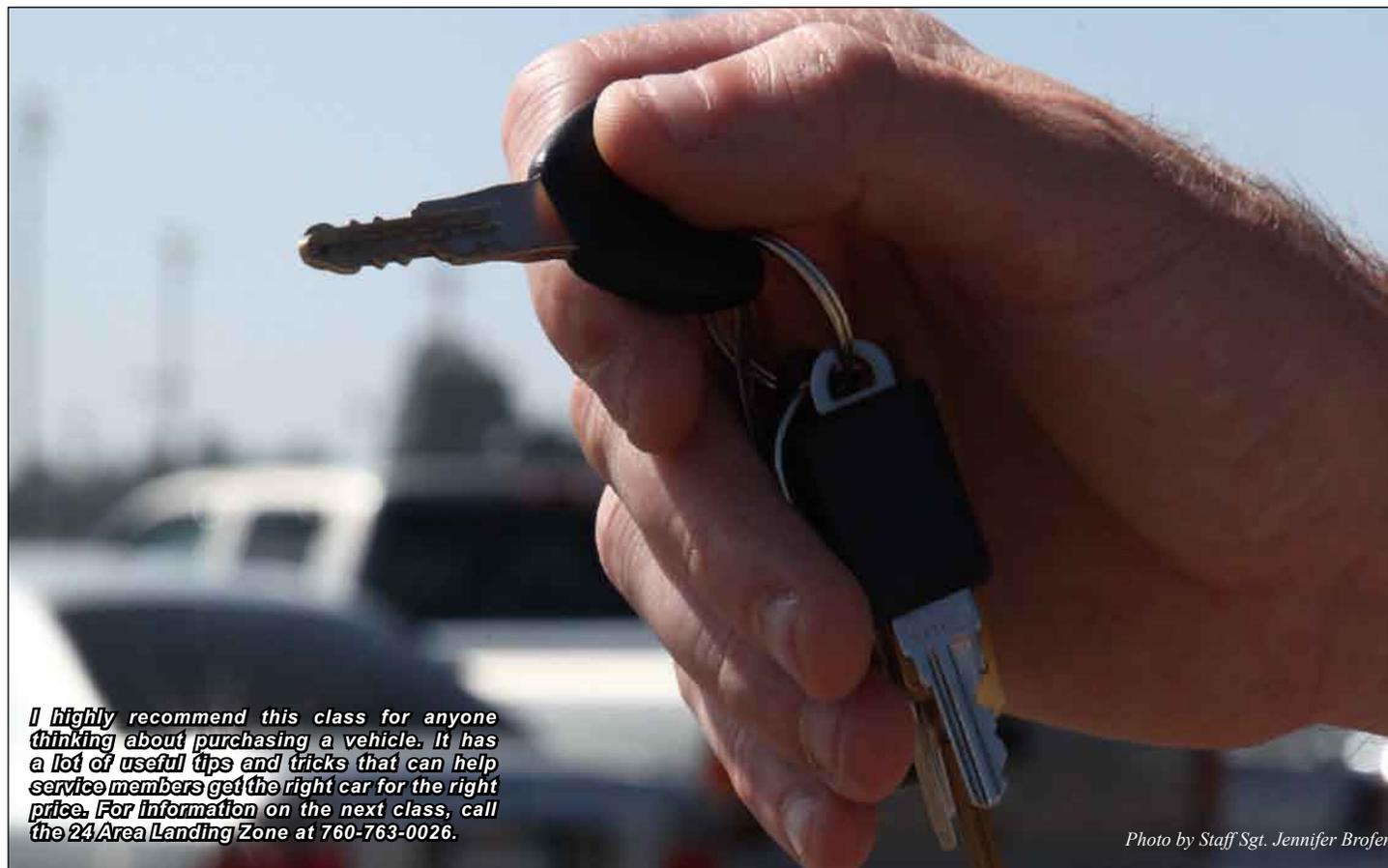
"What you're saying is you're doing your homework and you're not too sure what you want; you're just there to do some research or 'check them out,'" said Gleisberg.

The best way to buy a car, Gleisberg said, is to research the vehicle you are looking

to buy and work with an internet salesman, which allows you to negotiate the type of vehicle you want and the price.

To assist with research, there are several Web sites and magazines out there to assist you in finding the perfect car, at the perfect price. Consumer Reports magazine is an invaluable source because it features articles on the best and worst cars by year, separated into different price ranges. Web sites you can use for researching vehicles are www.cudlautosmart.com, which connects you to dealerships that offer "affordable credit union financing;" and Kelley Bluebook at www.kbb.com. Kelley Bluebook is a great resource because it gives an estimate of the value of a new or used car.

I highly recommend this class for anyone thinking about purchasing a vehicle. It has a lot of useful tips and tricks that can help service members get the right car for the right price. For information on the next class, call the 24 Area Landing Zone at 760-763-0026.



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Photo by Staff Sgt. Jennifer Brofer