‘Best Scholarship I Have Ever Received’

Marine Corps Reservist works to complete his double major at Western Michigan University thanks to the VFW

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When Spencer Poort graduated from Grand Haven High School in Grand Haven, Michigan, he had no idea what he wanted to do with his life. Now, he plans to soar through flight school while double majoring in management and operations with assistance from the VFW’s "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship."

Poort joined the Marine Corps Reserve straight out of high school in 2015. He is a corporal with Alpha Co., 1st Ban., 24th Marines, which he served in Afghanistan from 2017 to 2018.

“I joined because I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do right after college,” Poort said.

After he finished basic training, Poort was still unsure what he wanted to do as a career, but decided he should at least try something. Poort started nursing school at a community college, but realized that it wasn’t for him.

Next door to where he was taking classes for nursing was an airport, which inspired him to go to flight school at Western Michigan University.

Poort had a friend who worked at the airport and showed him the ropes.

“I just did an introductory flight,” Poort said. “From there I just kind of decided this is something I could see myself doing long-term.”

Almost immediately after his decision, Poort got his pilot’s license and transferred to Western Michigan University to get a degree in flight science. He plans to become a commercial pilot, or work in the offices for commercial flights after he graduates.

Poort discovered the Help A Hero Scholarship through Western Michigan University’s website, which has a page dedicated to scholarships for service members and veterans.

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"The Help A Hero Scholarship applied to me, so I went for it," Poort said.

Poort said that his flight school is another set of tuition on top of his regular semester tuition. He also said that before the scholarship, he was looking at nearly $46,000 in student loans.

Now, Poort said he is on track for finishing up school this year since he doesn't have as much to pay.

"Some of them (other scholarships) are $50 — $100 here and there and this one is up to $5,000 and it's by far one of the easier scholarships," Poort said about the Help A Hero Scholarship in comparison to other scholarships he has done in the past.

The three-time winner of the scholarship is grateful to know he will have less to pay for in the future. Poort hopes to receive the Help A Hero Scholarship one more time next semester. He also said that it is his favorite scholarship to apply for because it is easy and gets him the aid he needs to pay for his education.

"It's a great scholarship. It is by far the best scholarship I have ever received," Poort said.