

# BEING A BIG RED ONE SOLDIER

Through the eyes of two soldiers at different points in their careers, we tell the story of what it means to a part of the great Big Red One.



LT. COL. DAVE LANDER

PHOTO BY AUSTIN COLBERT



PFC. MARCUS McCALL

PHOTO BY BILLY BROWN

**A diamond in the rough: Long-time Army leader finds Fort Riley a good match.**

Early in Lt. Col. Dave Lander's career, a leader once told him he needed to be more of an a-hole. "You're too easy-going. You're too laid back," Lander recalled him saying. So he tried it. He projected his southern drawl and became more uptight than laid back. But the results were unfavorable. "Let me tell you something about people," he said. "You can try different things. You can try to change your leadership style, and you might find something that works for you. That particular leadership style did not work for me."

A new face to Fort Riley, Lander, the commander of 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, now leads more than 800 Big Red One soldiers. The South Carolina native is a fourth-generation "military guy." "I grew up in West Point pajamas," he said, "with little toy soldiers all over my PJs." As he prepared to graduate high school in 1981, his dad started asking him: "What are you going to do with yourself?" Without an answer, Lander returned to what he knew. "Although I wasn't a soldier," he



**ABOVE:** Lt. Col. Dave Lander poses with the Black Lion of the 1st Infantry Division. The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment calls themselves the "Black Lions."



PHOTOS BY AUSTIN COLBERT

**LEFT:** On what it means to be a Big Red One soldier, Lt. Col. Dave Lander, battalion commander of the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Division, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, says it's about the development of the soldier.

said, "I knew the military lifestyle. So I enlisted right out of high school as a private." Through his deployments under Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, Lander learned how resilient soldiers are. "Every job counts," he said. "Every job has its importance or we wouldn't have it."

Lander had the opportunity to work with several military branches, but mostly the Air Force in Iraq and Afghanistan. "My job there was to make sure that the effects we needed there on the ground were being provided by the Air Force," he said. "They do a good job at it." As Lander prepared to transfer to Fort Riley in May, he heard many positive comments. "When I talked to my mentor," Lander said. "I called him and said 'I'm going to Fort Riley.' " "Oh man, that's fantastic. Fort Riley is a diamond in the rough." Those were his words. That was the

first time I've heard it, but I've heard it three times since then." His Kansas experience has proved to be a "diamond in the rough" so far. "The Flint Hills, right in here," Lander said, motioning out his office window. "It's unbelievable. If you get on a little piece of high ground, you can see for a long way. And then you can dip down in low ground, and you feel like you're kind of in the Smoky Mountains, like where I come from." The lieutenant colonel remembers watching the Big Red One movie as a kid, and now he's a part of it. "I go back to the movie," he said. "The Big Red One movie with Lee Marvin in it. I was watching that movie as a kid, and I'm thinking about that, and I'm like, 'Doggone.'" Lander has found that Big Red One's leadership style matches his own. For him, it's all about development. "I trust. I like to develop soldiers," he said. "I think if you give a soldier responsibility, they will act responsibly." — Shelby Reynolds

## BIG RED ONE — IN HISTORY —

Big Red One is a division of soldiers that has seen just about everything. From trench warfare in World War I to combating Iraqi troops on the ground, the 1st Infantry Division has something to remember after a long history in war.

### APRIL 1917

#### >> 1st Expeditionary Division formed

The Allies in Europe needed a commitment from the Americans at the start of WWI, so President Woodrow Wilson formed the 1st Expeditionary Division, comprised of several units that were already in action on the U.S.-Mexican border in the Mexican Expedition. The name soon was changed to "1st Infantry Division."

### JULY 1917

#### >> Ground troops in France

The 1st Infantry Division was the first unit on the ground in WWI. The soldiers were placed in France to train in trench warfare.

### MAY 28, 1918

#### >> Combat: Battle of Cantigny

Big Red One engaged in the first assault of World War I in the Battle of Cantigny against German forces. The 1st Infantry Division fought alongside French troops to regain the capture of the French village, Cantigny. The battle also served as a confidence builder for American soldiers.