

A fresh face: Army rookie ready to learn, lead with historic Big Red One

It takes a lot of persuasion to get Pfc. Marcus McCall out of his alert, Army attitude. He'll stand with his hands behind his back, say "yes ma'am, yes sir" and rush to open doors.

McCall learned southern hospitality in Letohatchee, Ala. With an uncle in the Air Force, military life was somewhat normal. Enlisting just out of high school was an easy decision.

"I got tired of sitting around the house and being at home," he said. "I wanted a new change."

Now 20 years old, McCall is quickly making a name for himself with the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

The brigade held a five-day competition in which only the most fit, experienced Big Red One soldiers came away with the Expert Infantry Badge.

Of the 146 28th Infantry Regiment soldiers to begin the competition, only 24 earned a badge. The average age of participants was late 20s to early 30s.

McCall is only 20 years old. Most of the participants have attempted the feat multiple times. This was McCall's first attempt.

The competition required tasks such as realistic combat scenarios that included throwing hand grenades, entering and clearing a room and providing aid for wounded soldiers. A 12-mile road march, with 35-pound of gear, finished off the event.

"We were all trying hard, and just to know that I was good enough to be one of the guys who made it," McCall said. "It really made me feel proud. I had to call my father as soon as I was done."

McCall, who described himself as a "gym head," credits much of his athletic ability to running track in high school. Perhaps that's why it only took him a week to train for the competition.

But, he said, the experience was just as mental as it was physical.

"Training is like a one-person sport," he said, "and you really have to be in your own mind and train."

Physical competition runs in the McCall family.

"I used to compete against my cousins and my siblings," he said, "and we were all pretty grimy with each other, as I say. So you had to be pretty competitive and just push yourself."

This is the first time McCall has been away from his family. But in the nine

months he's been away, he has found family in the Army. While homesickness was a challenge at first, he said, now his largest obstacle is learning as much as he can.

"With me being so new, I don't know the things that other people know because they have the experience," McCall said. "So that's one of my fears, is when it's time for me to know, it's that I don't."

After watching his father and grandfather lead and take care of their families, McCall said he wants to follow the tradition and lead as well, only in the Army.

"I want leading to be my classification," he said. "Just being able to be there for someone when they need me ... being able to watch people grow."

Early in life, McCall had heard of the famed Big Red One and its celebrated history, so being a part of it now is humbling, he said.

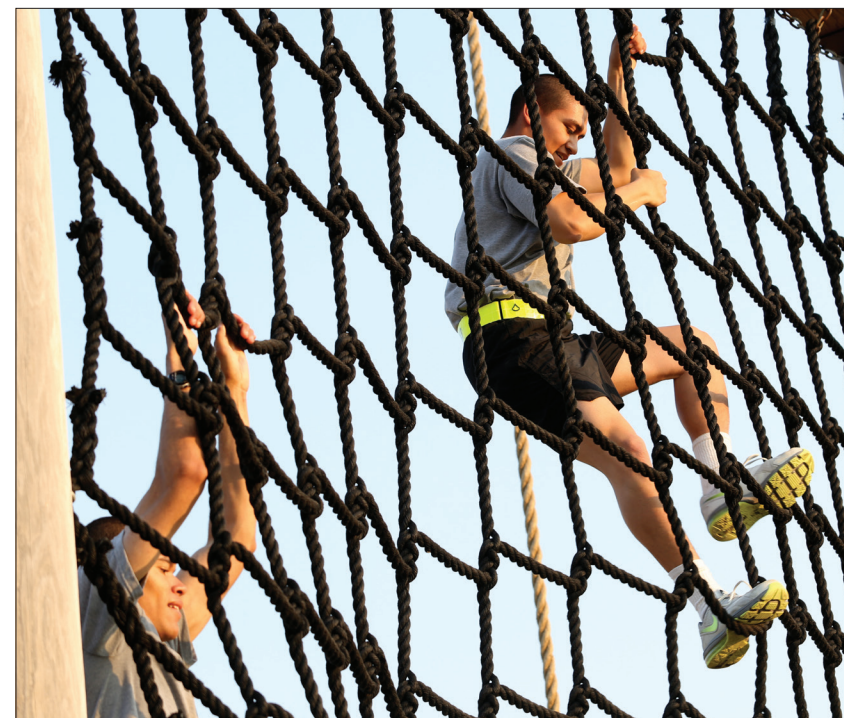
In five years, McCall hopes to have a degree in business through the Army and be leading in some capacity.

"To be a Big Red One soldier means that you're being a part of something older than yourself," the private first class said. "It means to be a part of something that's been around for so long. And just to know that people have paved this way. And I'm able to walk it."

— Shelby Reynolds



Pfc. Marcus McCall of the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, has been enlisted for nine months but has already gained attention after being awarded with the Expert Infantry Badge, typically awarded to soldiers 10 to 15 years older than him.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Soldiers from the Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment hit the ropes for PT July 2. Left is Spc. Andrew Young and right is Pfc. Roel Guzman. ■ From left to right, Sgt. Michael Andrade, Pfc. Anthony Heller and Spc. Ruben Heller of Company F, 701st Brigade Support Battalion lift logs at PT. ■ Staff Sgt. Christopher E. Nuyen, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment completes pull-ups for his PT routine. ■ Spc. Jesse Venable lunges with weights in the make-shift gym of the I-28 for PT on July 2. **PHOTOS BY AUSTIN COLBERT**

GET FIT

At 6:30 a.m., units gather their soldiers for physical training (more commonly called PT) every morning. The workout routines are designed to keep Big Red One soldiers physically fit and prepare them for deployment.

SEPTEMBER 1919

>> Last to return home

The 1st Infantry Division was the last division to leave Germany following World War I, said Bob Smith, director of museum division at Fort Riley. Before the Treaty of Versailles was signed, Big Red One and other troops were occupying Germany. The division was the first to arrive in WWI and the last to leave.

1940-1941

>> Amphibious training

Big Red One was the first division involved in amphibious training in North Carolina prior to entering World War II. After training alongside Marines, the 1st Infantry Division was now prepared for marine maneuvers during the WWII war effort.

APRIL 1942

>> Deployed to Europe

Again, the 1st Infantry Division was the first deployed to England. The United States had just declared war four months before deployment. In November 1942, Big Red One was involved in Operations Torch in North Africa and Operation Husky in Sicily.

JUNE 6, 1944

>> D-Day

One of the two assault divisions involved on the beaches of Normandy, the 1st Infantry Division invaded Omaha Beach in the infamous D-Day assault. Big Red One Gen. Clarence R. Huebner was called on by Lt. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to lead the assault on Omaha.

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— PFC. MARCUS MCCALL