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INSIDE INFO

See what our military children have to say.

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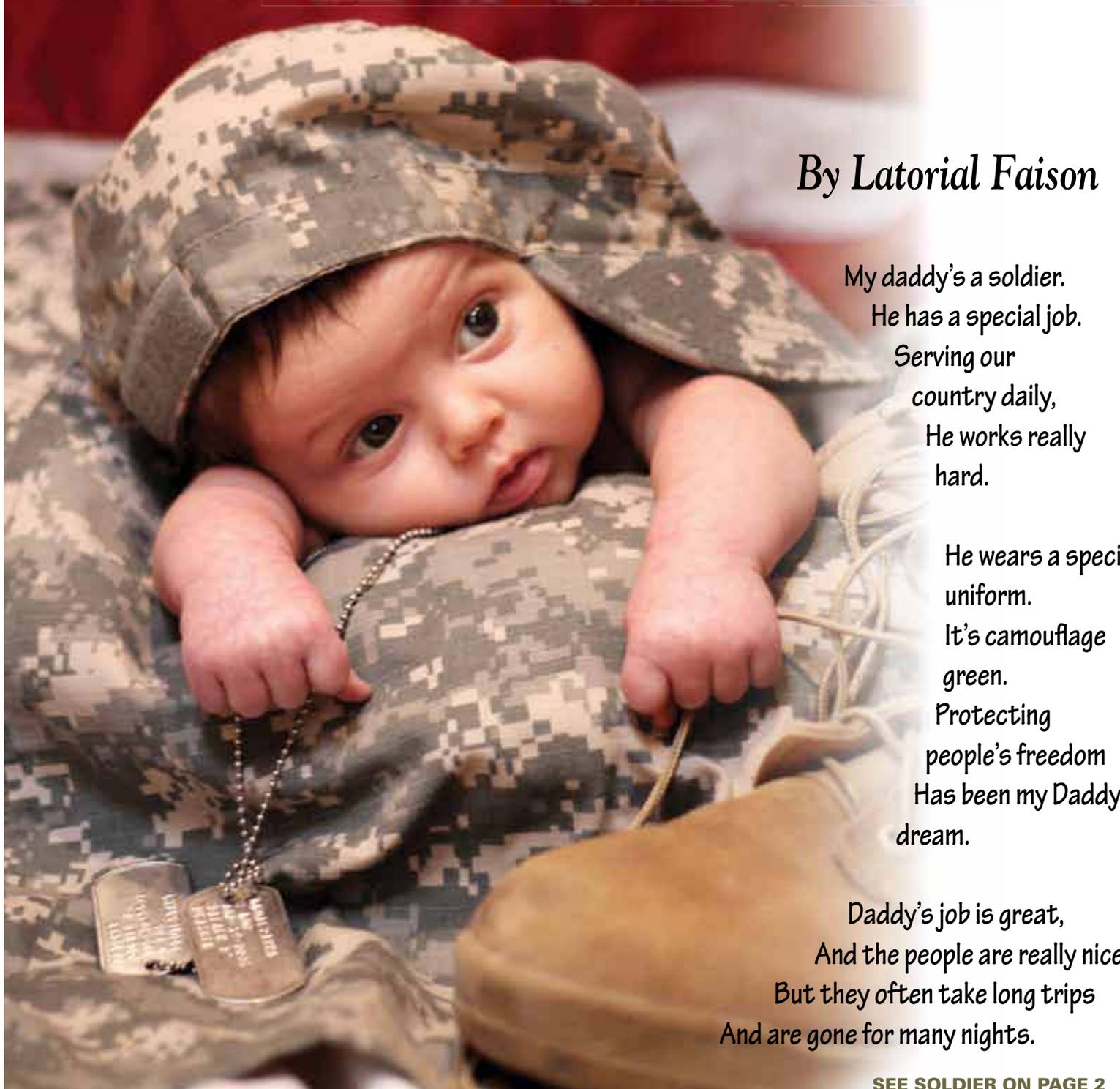
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Notice

Stripes Korea has a new email address. Contact us at Korea@Stripes.com

Individual email addresses for Stars and Stripes staff are now Last Name.First Name@Stripes.com

MY DADDY'S Month of the Military Child A SOLDIER



By Latorial Faison

My daddy's a soldier.
He has a special job.
Serving our country daily,
He works really hard.

He wears a special uniform.
It's camouflage green.
Protecting people's freedom
Has been my Daddy's dream.

Daddy's job is great,
And the people are really nice.
But they often take long trips
And are gone for many nights.

SEE SOLDIER ON PAGE 2

*Kids tell their stories
Pages 4-9*

CAN'T WAIT TO MEET DADDY - This is a picture of Clark Steven Metzger, son of Jessi and 1st Lt. Steven Metzger. Lt. Metzger is a MEDEVAC pilot currently deployed to Afghanistan. He deployed in September 2012 and his son was born December 6, 2012. They are anxiously awaiting their first meeting as a family early this fall (2013). This photo was submitted by proud grandpa Bill Giuliano.

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Idyllic Yangshou

BY KAT NICKOLA, STRIPES KOREA

Have you ever seen a traditional Chinese painting with a river running between dramatically steep mountains, verdant misty valleys, maybe a little rice paddy off to the side, and a guy in a bamboo raft trolling down the center? Well, that is Yangshou. China, yes China, is my version of paradise. For a family who loves being outdoors, being active together, and experiencing interesting culture this place has it all. We went in May when the weather was warm and comfortable during the day, and cool in the evening.

The quaint town rests along the Li River, and the low cost of things makes a river front hotel room a reality even for families on a budget. A few blocks deeper into town is an outdoor shopping market that turns into nightlife galore after the sun sets. There is really something here for everyone; unless you enjoy big budgets, big crowds, and tourist trodden routes.

The steep karst topography makes the area a rock climbing paradise; small minibuses travel out of town to all the best sites. We crammed into one with a guide who simply yelled at the driver when it was time to stop on the side of the road at the "wine bottle" area. The approach to the climb was an idyllic jaunt past paddy fields complete with



Enjoying a walk in the countryside after a day of rock climbing. Photo by Kat Nickola

water buffalo grazing. The rock climbing was top notch! Everything from 5.6 easy ups to challenging 5.11 routes to tackle. Limestone cliffs emerge from the dramatic green mountains and make for an awesome adventure; there are many different climbing areas. A perfect day of climbing must be followed with some delicious noodles from a nearby road stall while waiting for the minibus to appear.

That same limestone also provides for numerous local caves to visit. We espe-

cially enjoyed visiting the Wangji Cave. To enter we boarded a rickety bamboo canoe piloted by a weathered man who was quite skillful in maneuvering the craft into the entrance to the cave. It was a bit low, so we all needed to crouch under the hanging rocks. Inside, we were dropped off and allowed to explore on our own well-trodden path through the cave. We brought our own and enjoyed the amazing variety of still-active stalactites and stalagmites.



A typical morning scene in the village of Yangshou. Photo by Kat Nickola



China



At the end of the trail we were invited to enjoy the mud bath! After changing into swimsuits behind a not-super private curtain I was the only soul in our family who braved the healing but freezing cold mud. My husband and kiddo were waiting for the next part: the hot springs. I was unceremoniously hosed off and then we walked further up into the cave where a series of hot-spring fed pools cascaded down a huge mountain within the mountain. After testing a few we found the pools near the middle-top to be the right temperature and settled in. Ahhhh. In our own time we dried and dressed and caught the next boat out into the daylight.

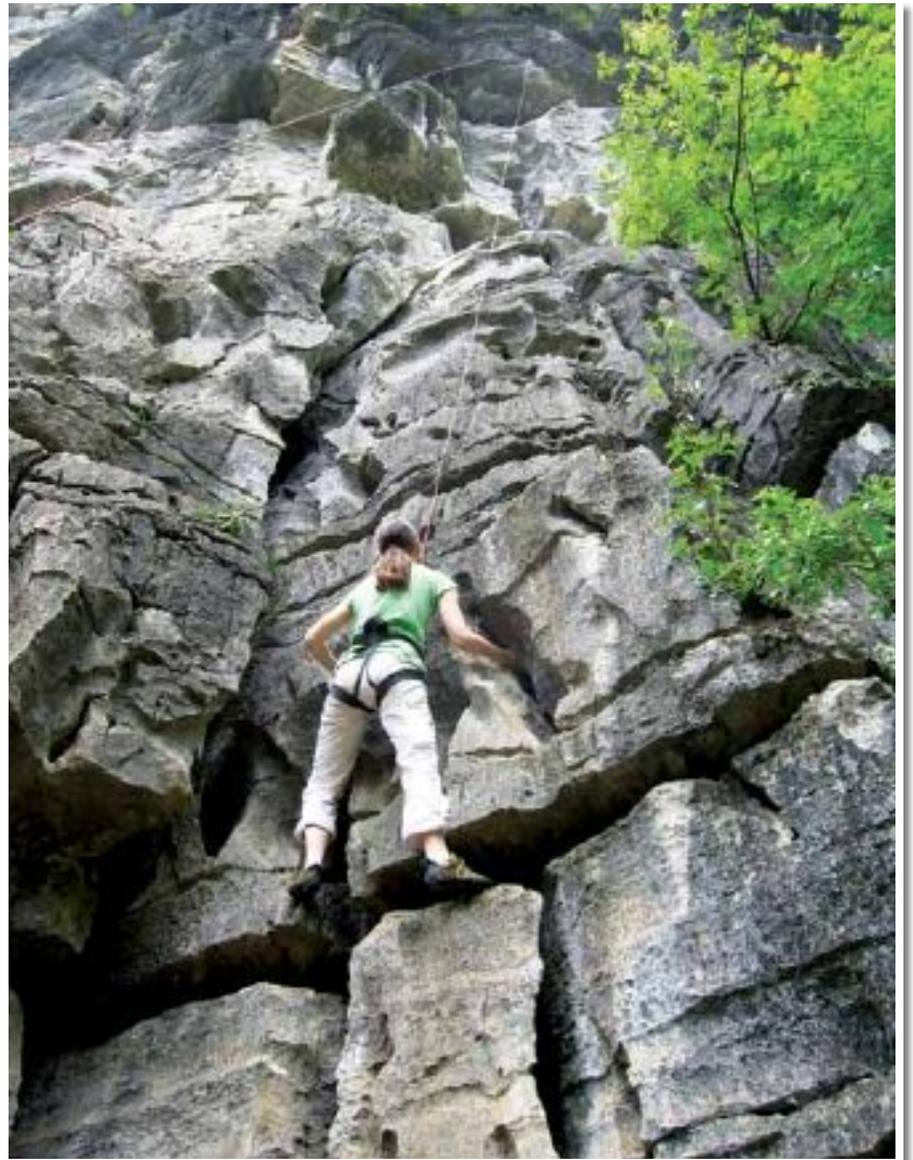
The water seeping from these mountains empties into the Li River, which runs through town. We rented a scooter one day to explore the gorgeous countryside. It was fun to travel around the small hamlets, see rice paddy's actively plowed with water buffalo, and watch the cormorant fishermen readying for an evening on the river. Another highlight was taking a bamboo raft down the river; a guide shuttled our scooter to the other end while we enjoyed riding the raft. The man steering would point out interesting rock formations and tell us "feets up" as we rolled down the rapids. In calmer portions we passed men fishing and women washing clothes in the river. We found the local people to be so very kind and helpful; everyone wanted to introduce

their children to our blond daughter who enjoyed the playmates.

Another way to explore the dirt roads along the river is to rent a bicycle.

At first we were concerned about renting and carrying a child in the kid carrier on our backs, but the Chinese have a solution for everything. They affixed a small basket-chair to the back rack of the bike for our daughter, so we could all travel in comfort! When we tired of the rural scenery and returned to town we found Yangshou to be such a pleasant place. There is the scenic old-town area nearest the river. Here you can find market stalls, tourist items, local minorities selling their crafts, and lots of food and drink options. Further away are more necessities for daily life: a bustling food and meat market, banks, schools, and the shops of normal life. It is an easy place to bike around with lots of local people on bikes or scooters, the occasional buffalo-drawn cart, and less vehicle traffic than other Chinese cities.

We spent 3 days in Yangshou during a month long trip to China. It was our first stop, and we still wish we would've stayed longer. To get there you must fly or take the train into Guilin and then get a ride to Yangshou from your hotel or a local bus. Chinese visa's are a must for this trip; so be sure to arrange those ahead of time. Our hotel, The Riverview, offered a car and driver for \$10 each way of the hour long trip.



Kat (The author) rock climbing outside of town. Photo by Bryan Nickola



My daughter with a Cormorant fisherman as he got ready for the evening's catch. Photo by Kat Nickola



View of the Li River from the waterfront in the town of Yangshou. Photo by Bryan Nickola