Mike Sutton graduated from Windfern High School and enlisted in the Marines in 2002.
Mike Sutton is an impulsive guy. Perhaps that’s why his parents weren’t surprised when the then-18-year-old Windfern High School graduate told them that he had enlisted in the Marines.

By January, he had left home for Camp Pendleton in San Diego. At first, Mike’s mom Angelica says she and her husband had mixed feelings. “There was some anxiety that he might not make it in that world,” she admits. “Being a soldier is very rigorous and has its consequences. But then we realized it could be Michael’s big life-changing event, as he had a difficult time in high school and wasn’t ready for college.”

Keeping In Touch
His parents were aware of all that was going on. Angelica says she was able to get a neat perspective from Mike’s chaplain guard on what was happening thousands of miles away in the desert. “The chaplain was a man in his early 50s who was called back to duty and assigned to my son’s platoon,” Angelica explains. “He would send very lengthy e-mails and it was through him that I found out what my son was doing in the war.”

Angelica added that she felt very proud of her son when the chaplain would write that he could not emphasize enough the importance of what those kids were doing for our country and Iraq. “He
wondered what inspired the soldiers to be so brave as to go on those convoys at night. He called attention to their courage,” she says. Mike communicated also. Angelica told of the times they would get phone calls at 2 or 3 a.m. “It would be Michael telling us he just got finished with an ambush or some other dangerous assignment,” she says. “He would spot a phone and had the urge to pick it up and give us a call.”

Mike received a lot of support from family and friends. “That’s all I really needed for encouragement,” he says. “And we were always getting care packages from schools and churches, which was really nice.”

The Forgotten War
Angelica calls this war ‘The Forgotten War’. “Nobody talks about it,” she says. “People don’t seem to be affected by it.” She remembers when there was strong patriotism and a different energy after 9/11. “But that hasn’t happened with this war,” she believes. “Even families with soldiers in this war feel they are a part of a small population.” Angelica is a counselor for Lone Star College, and when she works with students who were soldiers returning from the war, she finds that they want to forget about the war. “No one wants to hear their stories when they come back from the war,” she says. “Even the e-mails people get that were supportive are less in volume.”

Nevertheless, Angelica knows that the people in Iraq wanted American soldiers like her son to be there. “We ended up looking at Mike’s enlistment as one of the most mature things he has ever done.” And maybe not so impulsive, after all.

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LORRIE CROW is a Cypress writer who owns Write Designs, Inc. Her father, John Smith, served in the Air Force from 1951-1955.
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