



Graphic Courtesy / Curtis Barr, Jr.

THE BACK AND FRONT COVER of Curtis Barr, Jr.'s book was thought up by him and designed by Kathrine Rend. It reflects that his story is about him but also asks the reader to look at their own life.

Local author promotes book about his life

By Amber Hanneken
Staff Writer

HUGO — When reading Hugo resident Curtis Barr, Jr.'s book it feels as though you're peeking into someone's private journal. The book is professionally bound but inside, each page is in his own handwriting. Every mistake, colloquialism, spelling and grammatical error is permanently intact, and that's exactly the way Barr intended it.

"I wanted to go outside the norm because it's a biography. It's not a made-up story or anything like that, it's my life story," Barr said. "I felt in order for individuals to get me, they have to actually see my hand writing. It's not edited. Just like if you were speaking with me or talking to me, that's what you'll get in the book."

Barr said he has trouble categorizing the book. It's a biography but also offers life lessons and interjects scripture. He said unless you're willing to accept it as a self help book, it's just another good story. Throughout the story, he is looking back at his life and analyzing it. It is a personal and detailed account of his life, censoring nothing.

"It's all about me and my reactions to someone else and how, if I'd have done things differently, then maybe the situation would have been different; the outcome of my life would have been better than what I ended up being in that point in time in my life," he said.

Barr, 34, has been a Choctaw County resident his whole life — except for time he spent at college and in the military. He grew up in Grant, graduating from high school there in 1993. Barr received his Associate's degree in science from Connors State College in Warner, Okla. and spent some time at Oklahoma State University. He served in the Army for six years, including six months in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Today, Barr is a mentor and owns The Bridge Crew, LLC, which offices are out of The Trophy Case in downtown Hugo.

While doing a mentorship in Lawton, Okla. and working with rappers in the hip hop community there, the subject often came up of Oklahoma's small presence in the art world.

"I was like, 'we don't have any authors' and my little brother — I say

little brother but he's 31 now — said, 'bro, why don't you write a book?' And I said, 'man, if I write a book that's just another responsibility I have.' He said, 'you can do it. You're going to give us a different light,'" Barr said.

He mulled over the idea for a few weeks and talked about it with his family before sitting down and writing. It took him three months to complete the book and longer to get it published in the form he wanted. He used booksurge.com, a print-on-demand company that is an affiliate of Amazon.com. It was released Dec. 20, 2008, but Barr has waited until now to start promoting and marketing it.

"I wanted to make sure that I had a strong long-term plan," he said. "I was looking more so on the national scale so that's why it hasn't been talked about or discussed that much. Now that we have a long-term plan in place that's why we're moving forward with it."

Primarily, he's using a consignment through Hastings, which helps local artists sell their material, to increase sales. The book is currently on the shelves of the Paris and Greenville, Texas stores and five stores in Oklahoma, and he is in talks with seven others. Locally, it can be purchased at The Trophy Case at 100 E. Duke St. in Hugo.

Barr credits his family for supporting him in the writing process and hopes other Choctaw County residents pursue the goal of becoming a published writer.

"Maybe next year we're looking at offering an opportunity for some local authors here," he said. "We're going to actually take them through the process of becoming published and help them get it promoted, as a way of me giving back and helping promote the arts here in Choctaw County."

Barr said books sell if they create controversy of debate. He feels his does both of these things but also gives some answers.

"It's hard to say in the interview what the book is about because each individual is going to take from it their own," he said. "I've gotten many reviews and every one is basically how their minds intercept it. It's definitely going to make you think and meditate on some things."