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NCO publishes poetry book while deployed

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16th SB Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-West, Iraq – Sgt. JoAnna Menzie Davis, awards non-commissioned officer in charge, 16th Sustainment Brigade, set personal goals for this deployment, including publishing a book of poetry, which she accomplished when the first shipment of twenty copies of her book arrived here March 19.

“I was astounded,” Davis said. “I knew that all my hard work and dedication had paid off. I was elated. And I knew that I could not stop there.”

Davis said the poems in her book, written under the pen name Jodi, aren’t directly from her experiences, but are triggered by events in her life.

“They’re poems from living, seeing, knowing and understanding,” Davis said. “I can’t say they’re particularly from my life.”

Davis, with the help of Spc. Erin Smith, a graphics artist in the 16th Sust. Bde., published the 49-page glossy chapbook through a self-publishing service called Lulu.

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According to the service, the book is about growing up.

“‘From Within’ comes from the challenges and obstacles we all face as we grow from a young adolescent into an adult,” reads the description of the book on the website www.lulu.com “Life is filled with so many twists and turns that to understand and capture as many as possible [sic]. Here is a tribute to all who have been in these shoes!”

The multifaceted non-commissioned officer has had to overcome many obstacles in her life. Her mother left her and her siblings when she was very young.

“I was told she left when I was around one-and-a-half,” Davis said. “I don’t remember much about those years — phone calls, a visit or two, but I don’t hold it against her. I don’t think I’d be who I am today if she’d stayed.”

Davis was raised by her father, James C. Menzie Sr., and followed in his footsteps, all the way to the private school he attended, Southern Normal School, Brewton, Ala.

At the school JoAnna played basketball, volleyball and tennis, ran track, and even debated.

After high school the driven future NCO attended Wayne Community College and the University of Detroit — Mercy, where she earned a bachelor’s in developmental psychology. During college she also starred as a wide receiver, corner back, tight end and line backer on the Detroit Demolition, a women’s professional football team in the National Women’s Football Association.

After graduation she worked with developmentally disabled children, taught public

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school, and worked in adult foster care, but she enlisted in the Army in August 2006, and hasn't looked back.

“Situations told me it was time for a change,” Davis said. “If I hadn't joined the Army I wouldn't have been able to finish my book, pay my car off early, or have had the opportunity to meet my husband, Marcus Davis, whom I married after we deployed together”

Davis said she misses her three children, Takeam, 12, Kyra, 5, and Semaj, 3, but she is making the most of this deployment with her husband. Davis hopes to release a second book of poetry this year, and finish her master's degree.

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Sgt. JoAnna Menzie Davis, a non-commissioned officer in charge, 16th Sustainment Brigade, holds up a copy of her poetry book, “From Within,” that she developed and published while at Contingency Operating Base Q-West. She received the first 20 copies of the glossy, 49-page chapbook March 20. Davis, a 31-year-old native of Lake Wales, Fla., said the poems in her book, written under the pen name Jodi, aren't directly from her experiences, but are triggered by events in her life. “They're poems from living, seeing, knowing and understanding,” Davis said. “Writing poetry is a release for me. It's a

mental regurgitation of things I feel are impossible for me to communicate without poetry.” (Photo by Keith M. Anderson)