

# art & culture

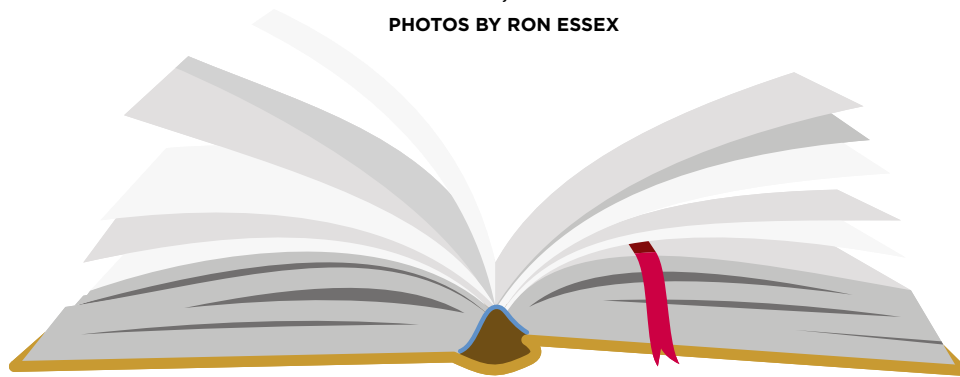
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# *when the day ends and* **DREAMS BEGIN**

Our Emerging Series of Colorful and Entertaining Children's Books

BY JAVIER LOPEZ, WITH DON ROSE

PHOTOS BY RON ESSEX



**BEGINNING AT AGE 13** I discovered a love and a gift for writing poetry. I would write about things that were going on around me and especially about my feelings and emotions. Poetry afforded me a release when things got tough. Putting my feelings on paper helped me to put them away. I occasionally composed and performed some rap, which has poetry-like rhymes and rhythms.

For the past three decades, my father-in-law, Don Rose has been entertaining his children and now grandchildren with whimsical little stories that he made up for them about a diverse series of topics from a fish to a mud puddle, and from a lion to a rock that could walk. At his wife Jenny's encouraging, Don began transcribing his stories to paper and storing them on a shelf in a closet so they wouldn't be lost.

After we discovered we were both writers, Don and I became intrigued by the idea of sharing our writings with our family, so I gave him all my poems. He assembled 18 of his stories and 20 of my poems into a booklet, printed it at a UPS

Store, made a number of copies on the UPS copying machine, and distributed them to our family members — especially to his grandchildren, which numbered eight at the time, four of them mine.

The booklet was a unique hybrid of poetry and prose, with subtle morals and life lessons. Everyone said they loved it and encouraged us to publish the stories and poems so that others could enjoy them, as well, so we sent a copy to Mascot Books. The acquisition editor liked it, agreed that it was worth publishing, and offered the company's editorial, design, marketing, production, and distribution resources to get the job done.

Any successful children's book needs a lot of graphic elements, especially pictures, to attract and hold the attention of young readers. Mascot Books gave us the names and portfolios of 30 artists they had vetted. After examining each of them, we settled on a Brazilian illustrator and cartoonist named Rayanne Vieira. Rayanne did a great job in creating colorful creatures, characters, and images that would encourage children and even adults to pick

up the book and begin to read the poems and stories inside. We pre-sold a few volumes on our [www.roselopezbooks.com](http://www.roselopezbooks.com) before its official release last March.

Mascot Books put it on Amazon and on the Barnes & Noble website. Thus far, we have held signings at Barnes & Noble in San Jose and Antioch, and at Riverhouse Books in Carmel.

We named the book, *When Day Ends and Dreams Begin*. The cover centers on a young red-headed boy reading a book with obvious pleasure while surrounded by an astronaut, frog, Leprechaun, and other fanciful images. We had the artist conceal roses throughout the book. At book signings, we encouraged children to examine their new book to find the object that appears in every story and poem.

Don and I have more poems and stories than we had space for in that first book. Plus, we are still writing new material and are planning to publish three volumes in a *When Day Ends and Dreams Begin* series. We are currently editing the second volume, which will have a different object concealed in each story and poem. We are





encouraged by the progress we are making on that second book; the quality remains high. If anything, the second will be more readable, fun, and memorable than the first.

Don has a creative spirit. He, also, encourages me to believe that anything is possible, so we are thinking of directions we could go in creating more books that would appeal to children. Future books will maintain the look and feel of the original trilogy.

My four children have been an encouragement to me. My oldest, Antonio is 21, Sabastian is 18, Chloe 17, and Giana 12. Giana is a gifted editor and critic. She reads our drafts and offers helpful suggestions and warnings.

Life is good. The genre itself is conducive to having fun. The stories and poems are whimsical and funny. Don and I are making children read, think, and laugh. What could be a better way to spend our time than that?

#### HOW IT ALL HAPPENED

I was born in 1978 and raised in L.A.'s Glassell Park neighborhood. The area is undergoing some gentrification now, but in those days it was a tough place and the scene of gang activities. Fortunately, I successfully avoided the gangs.

In 1996, when I was 18 years old, I moved to Martinez, spent six months living with relatives, and worked at Safeway. Life changed when my cousin Jason and I joined the Marines. Since childhood I had been fascinated by the intensity of the Marine Corps. I headed for Boot Camp at MCRD San Diego full of anticipation for the challenges and changes that were awaiting me.

People would imagine that I was setting myself up for a huge dose of painful reality. However, even though I experienced the pain, fatigue, and insults from the drill instructors, just as Full Metal Jacket depicted them, I really enjoyed facing up to the challenges. I knew the instructors were only trying to break us recruits down, so they could build us up and mold us into an effective fighting force. I welcomed the strenuous exercises and

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marching with full pack. It felt good to become "one of the few and the proud."

Marching turned out to be my favorite exercise; I enjoyed the cadence and if I had re-enlisted, I would have made a good drill instructor. However, my first child was born and I thought the nomadic life of a Marine would keep me away from home too often; I didn't want to miss out on my kid's childhood. My son Sabastian was born Dec. 1, 2000 and I got out two weeks later.

I enrolled in the Criminal Justice program at DVC with the intention of becoming a probation officer and reaching out to the troubled youth who reminded me of the young men on the "mean streets" of my Glassell Park neighborhood. However, before completing my studies I had to support myself and my family, so I got a job at an internet company. After a year-and-a-half, I got a better job with Kaiser Walnut Creek, working in Materials Services, ensuring that each department was well-supplied with their consumables.

It was a good job and paid the bills, but I have the kind of mind that needs change, so I got a great job in Las Vegas as a maintenance mechanic with Wonder Bread, keeping the production lines running. After a year and a half of trying to work remotely, I wanted to be closer to my children and, in October 2003, transferred to the San Francisco Wonder Bread plant.

Three years later my life turned around when I married a woman named Holly Rose. Her dad, Don Rose, was a

landscape architect. Tragedy struck the family when Don's daughter, Maddie, was killed in an auto accident. I was at work and thinking about the pain that Don and Jenny were experiencing after Maddie had been taken from them so suddenly, leaving behind only memories and a painful gap in the family circle. Words and sentences began to form themselves in my mind and before the shift ended, I had composed a poignant poem about our loss, that I called, "In Your Dreams Is Where I Will Reside."

The poem was very comforting to Don and Jenny. They both told me how much the poem had helped them with their grief.

One day my daughter, Giana, came back from grandpa's house and told me a wonderful story that Don had told her, called "Rocky, the Rock that Could Walk." It was about a rock that had washed up on a beach and began to move around. I was so impressed with the story that I wrote a poem called "Rocky the Rock" as a complement. Giana loved the poem, so I sent it to Don who liked it as much as Giana had. Rocky turned out to be the spark that ignited a flame within us, that fired our writing partnership.

It's been great working with Don! We are both military veterans and share a number of life experiences in common. Also, each of us has four children, which are enough to provide rich experiences in facing up to, and overcoming, challenges, plus a number of storylines.

Don and I have developed a special relationship. We look at things differently but, rather than ever being a source of contention, the ability to apply our two viewpoints to a topic or issue creates synergism — like generating a 3-D view of the particular issue and discovering together what each of us might have missed without the sharing and cooperation.

Check out our book for yourself. Go online to Amazon or Barnes & Noble and dive into our adventures. **110°**

*For more information, go to [www.roselopezbooks.com](http://www.roselopezbooks.com). Send comments about the article to [editors@110mag.com](mailto:editors@110mag.com).*



