

## Lopez finds success in writing, will publish memoir

BY NELLIE VINOGRAD  
STAFF WRITER

A life of trauma and pain, determination and hope. It seems unfair to try to sum up the captivating life of Victor Lopez in only a few words. That is why a new book will give full justice to his story.

Lopez, a CCE senior English major, will publish his memoirs, "Victor's Luck," in the next year.

The publication opportunity came to Lopez after his piece "Transcending Trauma" won the annual Student Writing Contest for The Nation Magazine while he attended Guilford Technical Community College.

Lopez received attention from agents and publishers. After 290 pages and a five-figure advance from a publisher, his memoir is heading into the editing stages. As of yet, Lopez does not know an exact publication date but hopes to see it published in 2014.

His book will focus on luck and perseverance amid growing up in foster homes throughout the country and experiencing life-long trauma.

"A lot of people who know me now know me as a mysterious, outgoing 32-year-old who has a story," said Lopez. "I now have an attorney as a father and a doctor as a mother, so others probably assume I'm some spoiled rich kid, and that's not the case."

Lopez said he grew up in a toxic environment created by an unstable and abusive biological family and lived in 40 foster

homes and three group homes during his early years before being adopted. His adopted parents were killed when he was 14, which returned him to a life without a steady home.

Throughout his youth, he bounced around the country, encountering homelessness, incarceration and constant upheaval.

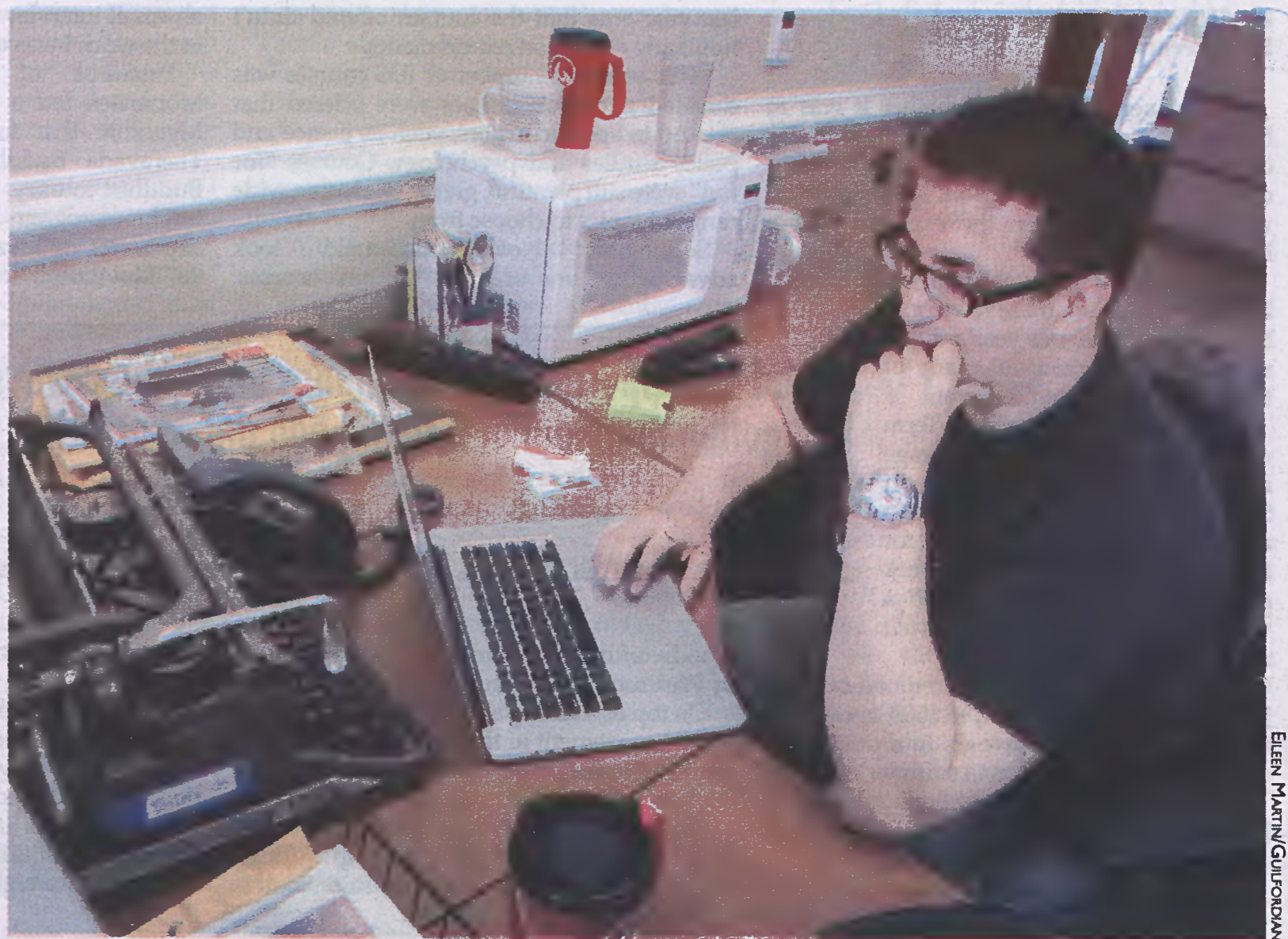
After hearing his story on a radio show, Elaine Feraru corresponded with Lopez and took him in as her adopted son. She worked with him to develop his grammar and writing skills and was his main inspiration for writing his winning essay and eventually, his memoir.

"I forced him to write," said Feraru in a phone interview. "I bugged him everyday. We joke that I am the editor-in-chief of his life."

Without Feraru's influence, Lopez said he probably would not have entered the essay contest in the first place. Though Lopez said he never intended to get published, he always wanted to write his story and said the process has been therapeutic for him.

"Time and time again I've been told by others that my story will help someone else," said Lopez. "It's like one big 'it gets better' story with a couple of twists in the middle."

Lopez has always had a passion for the raw art of storytelling. At around age 26, he started getting published and a year later, came to Guilford College where he



EILEEN MARTIN/GUILFORDIAN

CCE senior **Victor Lopez's** memoir tells of his difficult life. He lived with an abusive family, moved to 40 different foster homes, lost his adoptive parents and lived on the streets. Lopez hopes his book will be published by next year.

further honed his craft.

Through work on The Guilfordian and in English classes, Lopez developed his academic writing abilities and distinctive style.

Assistant Professor of English Mylène Dressler said Lopez's honesty, clarity and unadorned

prose were some of the qualities that made him stand out to her as a writer as well as his obvious passion for writing.

Lopez plans to attend law school and continue a life of helping people. He hopes that whoever his story reaches will be inspired, whether they themselves

are in a bad position or have the ability to help someone who is:

"There's a lot of unhappy in the book," said Lopez. "I've gone through a lot in life, but there has to be an upside. Most people would have said my story was finished at a very young age, but I just kept on going."

## Four students to be published in national anthology for undergraduate work

BY MAILE MUNRO  
STAFF WRITER

"A spider-web pattern, they call it, when tempered/glass cracks this way, not breaking all the way through but/broken just the same, useless now. A spider spends — how long?/ an hour, a lifetime? — literally hanging its life on a thread. A broom/handle in the hand of a bored schoolboy brings down in no time;/ broken, lifeless now. Residual matter. Sticky."

These poignant opening lines from CCE student Brian Smith's poem, "Spider-web," introduce an intriguingly mysterious story of a fawn playing possum, a wheelchair and the S-curve. "Spider-web" was published in the 2013 edition of the Greenleaf Review and is now moving on to a much bigger platform.

"We think of writing as a solitary activity, but it can't just exist within you," said Smith. "It has to go somewhere."

For many Guilford students that somewhere is the yearly publication of the Greenleaf Review. And now, for the first time, Guilford writers and artists will be published in Bennington College's national anthology of undergraduate work "plain china: Best Undergraduate Writing 2013."

Published on a website that has gotten more than 43,000 hits from all 50 states and

more than a 150 countries, "plain china" offers undergraduates another publication through which young writers and artists can be connected.

Sharing on such a large platform can be intimidating.

"When you make art, it's an extension of yourself," said junior Juliet Magoon, whose old Hollywood-inspired photograph will be published in "plain china." And the fear of exposing that extension of yourself is great, but so is the reward.

"It's important to be vulnerable because when people are vulnerable, they connect," said Magoon.

Mylène Dressler, assistant professor of English, Greenleaf Review advisor and published author, speaks of the time she received an ink drawing of a rooster from a reader who wanted to reciprocate the sharing of creative work. This call and response between the artist and the audience is what makes art special and worthwhile.

An audience can reassure the author that they are not alone. An audience can draw attention to themes that the author did not consciously intend. The conversation between the artist and the audience creates community.

"You have to spread your voice around," said Hannah Reed, senior art major who will

have an oil painting published.

Reed, inspired by the idea of theater sets, asks for a response in making art that creates a place for a story.

In regards to the creative community at Guilford, the process is cyclical. Whether in Digital Darkroom or Creative Writing, professors at Guilford challenge and encourage their students to create work worthy of being

in an anthology.

"Creativity has a way of breeding more creativity," said Dressler.

Make sure to check out Smith, Magoon, Reed and senior Raina Martens in "plain china" later this year, and enter the cycle yourself by submitting your short stories, poems and artwork to the Greenleaf Review (litmag@guilford.edu) by Feb. 10.



**THE GREENLEAF  
REVIEW WANTS TO  
HEAR FROM YOU!**

email your submissions to  
[litmag@guilford.edu](mailto:litmag@guilford.edu)

(deadline: Feb. 10)