

Resident wins top prize for photograph

BY ALEXEI KOSEFF

FOR THE LAGUNA WOODS GLOBE

Joel Goldstein has been taking pictures since he was 9 years old, but he never imagined that he would one day win a prize for his hobby.

He never even imagined taking part in a photo contest. Photography has always been something that he has done “for my own personal enjoyment,” Goldstein said.



Goldstein

Yet he is now one of two winners of the 14th Annual California Ocean and Coastal Amateur Photography Contest. The good news came earlier this month when Goldstein found out that his entry had been selected as the “viewer’s choice” in an online poll.

The contest, sponsored by the California Coastal Commission, promotes conservation by featuring photographs that highlight the importance of the ocean and coast to California life.

Goldstein took his winning picture on a tour of Route 1 with his wife last September. While visiting Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, an oft-overlooked attraction in Big Sur, he was struck by the “spectacular” McWay Falls and took several



Joel Goldstein’s winning photo.

shots.

“The drama of it all is the setting,” he recalled of the waterfall, which flows directly into the ocean.

Initially, Goldstein had no idea that he

had stumbled onto photographic gold. When a professional photographer visited the Camera Club last fall, he submitted the picture for evaluation and was shocked to receive the highest marks.

“I nearly fell off my chair,” Goldstein said. “My wife told me to settle down.”

He credits the Camera Club, of which he has been a member since 2004, with giving him the courage to submit his picture when the Coastal Commission photo contest was announced in May.

Goldstein did not expect much, especially since it was the first photography competition he had ever entered. He told a few friends, who began to circulate the link, and soon he was leading the vote.

Despite a last-minute push by the runner-up — a picture of a snowy egret in flight — Goldstein was still ahead when the contest closed on July 27.

That surprised him most of all.

“It made me feel like a better photographer than I thought I was,” he said.

Professional judges will announce their picks in September, and if Goldstein is extra lucky, he might just come out a double winner.

In the meantime, he is looking forward to enjoying his prize: a complimentary stay at the Fairmont Hotel in either San Francisco, Sonoma, San Jose or Newport Beach.

So what does Goldstein think is the secret of his success?

“Maybe being a middle-westerner originally, I’m more taken by the ocean than some people,” he said.