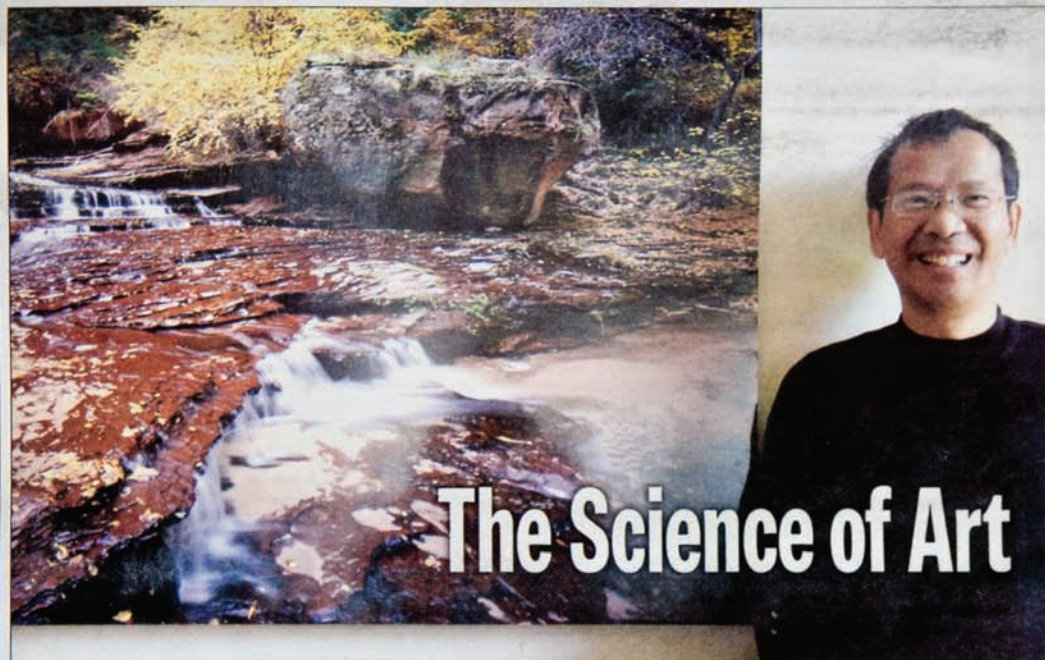


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The Science of Art

Local photographer Quang Tuan Luong recently completed a 15-year detailed photographic series of all our 58 national parks, called The National Park Project. Photo by Donna H. Eliason

Local resident left scientist career to become photographer

Unique National Park project completed

By Donna H. Eliason
Staff Writer

Why did an Evergreen resident, with a PhD in computer science, born and raised in Paris, become passionate about mountaineering, photography and American national parks? All this, plus the fact that 44-year-old Quang Tuan Luong recently completed a 15-year extensive detailed photographic series of all our 58 national parks, called The National Park Project.

As a child, Quang Tuan Luong's experiences with nature outside the city consisted of skiing in the Alps and beach trips with his Vietnamese family. His priorities changed when he joined the mountaineering club in college. During the week he studied in the city, but spent weekends climbing in the pristine Alps. Because of his passion for the wilderness, it took five years to complete his



PhD studies at the University of Paris.

In early 1993, he visited the United States because of curiosity, and the desire to visit places like Yosemite. "One of the few places I kept hearing about from other climbers was Yosemite. He took a post-doctorate position at Cal Berkeley, the closest major research university to Yosemite National Park. During the week he researched artificial intelligence, and wrote articles and a book. He spent weekends in Yosemite. Then, photography meant recording places he climbed and enjoyed.

In the spring of 1993 he climbed alone to the top of Denali (Mt. McKinley), the tallest mountain in North America, and later that year visited the Utah parks and Death Valley. He'd never seen a desert before, as they're nonexistent in Europe. There he decided to use a 5x7 large format camera which gave him additional creative opportunities. Now he saw prominent details in the photograph that

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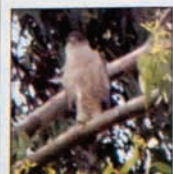
An image captured by Luong at Redwood National Park.



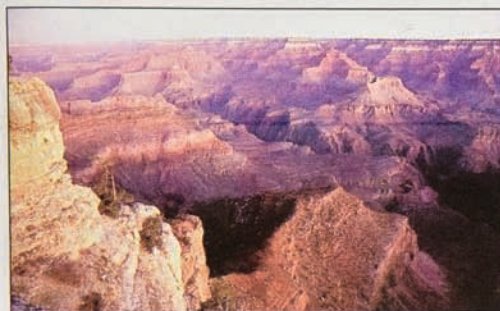
Meet Mike
McGeough, an
Ultra-Distance
Cyclist
See page 35

'Movies Under The Stars' to be
held at Evergreen Village:
'Nim's Island' to be shown
See page 6

It's a bird! It's
a plane! It's a
hawk attacking
students!
See page 5



Times Your Community



A Luong photograph from Grand Canyon National Park.

Photographer

Continued from page 1
he never saw at the actual site. His photography had reached a new level.

Luong was fascinated with the beauty and contrasts of the national parks. He says, "I thrive on looking for new experiences. After spending so much time in the glacial atmosphere of steep high mountain faces, I was drawn to the natural diversity offered by the national parks, as I noted that each environment gave rise to distinct new emotions." He wanted to "document the parks in a way that would do justice to their splendor."

For the last 15 years Quang photographed the parks from various perspectives to document the beauty, diversity and distinguishing features. "I enjoyed the challenges of planning and traveling to a number of remote locations, each with their own logistical problems. There was also the intellectual curiosity of finding out what makes each place special and unique in the larger picture of things."

His research training enabled him to include all unique physical highlights and their seasonal changes. He says, "I like to emphasize the beauty, as I feel that aesthetic appreciation will lift our soul and eventually lead to awareness and respect for the natural and cultural diversity of our planet."

Photographs weren't only taken from the roadside, but throughout the parks, including the wilderness. He traveled by car, plane, float-plane, ferry, motorboat, canoe, kayak and by foot. He also snorkeled and did scuba diving. Luggage was never simple since it included 70 plus pounds of photography and camping equipment plus personal items.

In order to clearly see Glacier Bay in Alaska, Luong took a kayaking class in Santa Cruz in preparation for his first kayaking trip. Then he spent two weeks with a friend paddling through icebergs to glean the beauty of the park.

He and his wife, Lanchi, took a floatplane with an inflatable canoe to an Alaskan Eskimo village. This was the starting point for their trip down the wild Kobuk River.

Often adventure prevails in the wilderness. Once Luong planned an incredible photograph of giant bear tracks along the shore of Naknek Lake in Katmai National Park. He was under his camera cloth when he felt a presence behind him. "There was a brown bear just a few yards behind me." He retreated slowly. The bear had a great time playing with the camera, tripod and lens. His lens case has a distinguished claw tear feature.

He married Lanchi Vo in 1991 after extensive business communication via email. They met in Vietnam; he from France, she from the United States. They now have two children: a 4 1/2-year-old girl and a 3-year-old son. Lanchi has an MS in Chemistry from San Jose State University. She was a chemist for approximately 15 years before they had children. She now works closely with Luong with their home-based photography business.

How many miles did he travel to complete this project? He says at least 100,000 since he visited more than 50 parks twice. In this self-financed project Luong took several two-week trips each year. Towards the end he decided to become a full-time photographer when he realized the commercial value of his photography.

What's his favorite park? "Each place is so different I can't compare them," but he enjoys their beauty. His photographs will be displayed in Terra Galleria Artworks in Santa Monica for two months. His photographs can be seen on his website: www.terragalleria.com/parks. In a few years he'll publish a book with about 500 of his photographs.

What's next? He's considering combining culture with physical beauty by photographing international UNESCO world culture sites. "This can lead to an awareness and respect for the natural and cultural diversity of our planet."



A California coastal scene by Luong.