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Art in Public Spaces Committee Chairperson Teresa Onoda stands beneath "The Fisherman" sculpture at Moraga's West Commons Park.

Photo Vera Kochan

## 'The Fisherman' makes big splash in West Commons Park

By Vera Kochan

There's a new art installation in Moraga's West Commons Park (across Moraga Road from Moraga Commons Park), and Art in Public Spaces Committee Chairperson Teresa Onoda is anticipating more to come.

"The Fisherman" by artist Tony Zorich ([tonyzorichart.com](http://tonyzorichart.com)) was reviewed and approved at a joint meeting of the APSC and the Park and Recreation Commission in May, and a month later got a thumbs up from the town council. It is the first work of art to grace the new park, and as such the loaned piece has been placed in a perfect spot for maximum appreciation by joggers and walkers alike.

"West Commons Park was created with the understanding that it was to be a passive park, which is perfect for sculptures," explained Onoda.

Zorich, a resident of Danville, Calif., was approached about the project more than three years ago. According to his bio, "I spent my working years in real estate."

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## History and humanity collide in Steve Falk's 'California Story'



By Lou Fancher

During the first few weeks of the COVID-19 shutdown, a weed field of worries erupted in the mind of former longtime Lafayette city manager Steve Falk. He worried not only about his own health, but about his wife, adult children, other family members including his parents—and friends, colleagues, people he knew worldwide, even total strangers whose stories were told in the news and on social media.

Accustomed to the steady beat of a

career that had him serving Lafayette as city manager for 28 years—in several "codas," Falk was hired for interim city administrative positions in Hercules, Richmond and Oakland—he knew he needed a project to fill the hours of empty time during the pandemic lockdown. A long-considered idea of writing a book about California began to percolate. California, he thought, was a state loaded with vast, plunderable history. With few clear thoughts about the form or narrative for the book, he was at first spinning wheels in his head more than writing

words on a page.

Perhaps it was a pandemic nightmare about mortality and lost stories—his family's or those of other families, or of California's—that played itself out during one night. Or, perhaps it was the tag line of an oral history project he had participated in that haunted him with its "get the stories before they're gone" warning. Whatever the reason, Falk says in an interview that a lightbulb lit up. "I woke up one morning with the big idea. I could write a story about my family that tells a larger story about California at the same time. That was the genesis. I remembered stories my dad and grandfather had told me. I wanted to write those stories down before they were lost forever."

The result is "California Story," a serial memoir that in 39 chapters published online tells the true story of his family's history and cross-stitches those stories with highlights of California history. Beginning with his grandparents, Art and Marion Falk, "two dustbowl

refugees who fled Nebraska during the Great Depression to pursue the California dream," and in 1930 arrived in Bell, California, each chapter takes its journey in different California locations; suburban Lakewood, Coachella Valley, Disneyland, San Luis Obispo, Fresno, Los Angeles, Yosemite, Lafayette, Berkeley, San Francisco, Oakland, Palo Alto and more. Along the way of tracing his roots, Falk finds broader stories to tell that in summary could be said to illustrate the richness and complexity of the state. Beginning with the swift, visceral opening of Chapter 1, a surfing drama that reads like an epic myth and immediately establishes Falk's literary tone, chapters chronicle personal stories as they address California's public transit systems, city management, land and business ownership, commercial development and residential zoning codes, the Loma Prieta Earthquake, skiing in the Sierra, and much more.

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