



BY BRIAN SCHWARTZ

**WENDELIN VAN DRAANEN MOVED TO THE CENTRAL COAST AT A YOUNG AGE.** With over thirty titles to her credit, she's one of the most prolific authors on the Central Coast. Best known for her award-winning "Sammy Keyes" mystery series for young readers, many of her books have become bestsellers. Her "Shredderman" series was made into a movie by Nickelodeon and in 2010, her novel "Flipped" became a feature film directed by Rob Reiner. Needless to say, she's accomplished more than most throughout her twenty-five-plus year multi-genre writing career, yet she has managed to stay humble and grateful.

She recently published her first work of historical fiction, "The Peach Rebellion." Inspiration came from an affection for her mother-in-law whose past she knew little about. One reviewer describes it "The Grapes of Wrath meets Grease." "The Peach Rebellion" is a Young Adult (YA) historical novel set in the Central Valley (a fictionalized Oakdale) during the post-dustbowl era when Wendelin's mother-in-law was growing up. Just as the elements combine to produce a peach, the three main characters come together in a memorable story.

Wendelin pointed out that 55% of the audience for YA books are in fact adults seeking stories of discovery and innocence (as compared to the darker themes so prevalent in adult fiction today). "The Peach Rebellion" has been popular with women's book clubs where Wendelin often makes surprise appearances.

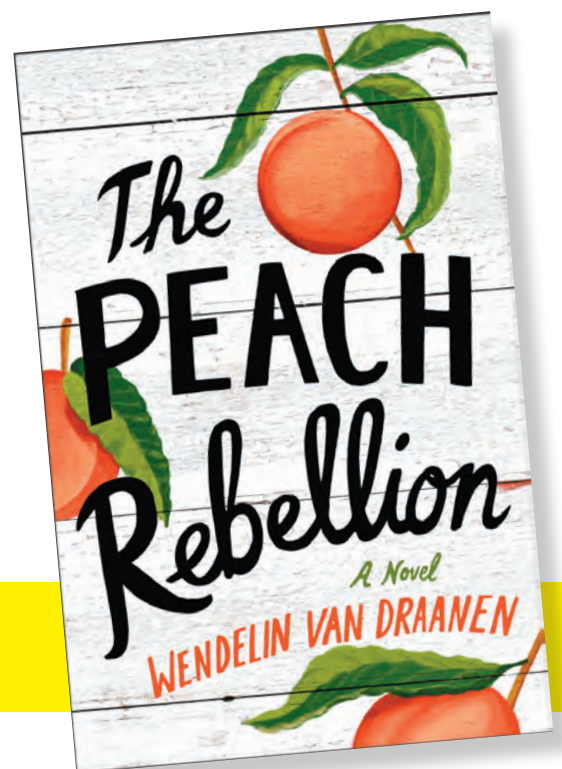
A note about Wendelin's tenacity: She spent over ten years sending out query letters before landing an agent. It wasn't until she had been picked up by a major publisher that she made the difficult choice to walk away from her beloved teaching career. Part memoir, part self-help for writers, "Hope in the Mail" is the non-fiction title that has landed her on the stage at writers' conferences around the country.

When writing books that appeal to children, it helps to be a teacher and parent. Her popular "Shredderman" series came about because she couldn't find books that appealed to her two sons. To market her books (a role that publishers now expect from authors), she speaks at schools and has developed strong relationships with librarians.

Supporting Wendelin in her journey is her husband Mark Parsons, who himself became a full-time author in 2014 after a career with PG&E at Diablo Canyon (I will be featuring Mark in a future issue).

Currently, Wendelin is assisting Mark with the launch of his latest title, "The 9:09 Project." Book marketing itself is a full-time job and she confided in me that it took her three months just to set up an eleven-day book tour.

Where does she find inspiration? In her own words: "What inspires me to write is wanting to give my reader a compelling story that leaves them thinking more broadly about the world and their role in it." **SLO LIFE**



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