



WENDY MENARA

SACRAMENTO, CA

Wendy J. Menara worked for years in the film and TV industry and has had multiple scripts produced for stage and screen. She resides in the Sacramento Valley with her rescue dog, Cecil.

Her debut memoir, *Silence of Shame: A Child Caring for Her Bedridden Mother*, has been named one of *Kirkus Reviews*' 100 Best Indie Books of 2020. Recognized as 1st place memoir of 2021 by Royal Dragonfly Book Awards.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Caregiving
- Childhood trauma
- Shame, guilt
- Abusive family relationships

CREDENTIALS

- Spent formative, early childhood years as a caregiver for her dying mother
- Spent years working for one of the world's premier storytelling organizations, Lucasfilms

AUDIENCES

- Anyone who cares for a loved one with a chronic illness, has weathered a childhood fraught with abuse of any kind, feels ashamed of secrets that weigh heavily on their heart, or lost a parent while in their youth
- Anyone who loves a caregiver
- Anyone diagnosed with an illness or who may be cared for by others and desires to understand what they may experience
- Anyone who likes to read memoirs
- Anyone who, as a child, witnessed other siblings being physically abused
- Anyone who has been affected by multiple sclerosis
- Anyone who lost a parent while in their youth
- Anyone who discovered secrets about that parent that caused them unease and conflict

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT WENDY?

- Wendy spent her formative years caring for her mother. She bathed her, changed her bedpan, and fed her. Most of us enter this season later in life, but Wendy experienced it early, and it profoundly changed her outlook on life. How can her early experience and subsequent decades of processing inform us as we enter into the years where we'll be the caregiver?
- Wendy decided to no longer keep the secrets that were burdening her and found freedom.

WENDY SAYS:

"My fear of betraying our tightly held family secrets and sharing them with strangers was daunting. My mantra throughout the writing of this memoir—embrace your story. Own your voice. Sharing intimate family truths was overwhelming and, at times, left me grappling with self-doubt. My mother didn't broadcast her safeguarded secrets for a reason. Why should I reveal them and provide fertile life to long-ago memories in the writing of this book? But, distinguished author Anne Lamott's quote, "You own everything that happened to you. Tell your stories" helped me forge on. That sentiment propelled me to convey my narrative as honestly as I could, so I found my voice and stripped those secrets of any last power they may have had over me."

WHERE TO FIND HER

- **Cell:** 415-302-1155
- **Email:** wendyjmenara@gmail.com
- **Website:** <https://www.wendyjmenara.com/>
- **Social:** facebook.com/wendyj.menara
- linkedin.com/in/wendyjmenara
- **Availability:** Wendy is available by advanced arrangement throughout the week, evenings and weekends.



SILENCE OF SHAME

A Child Caring for Her Bedridden Mother

In her debut memoir, *Silence of Shame: A Child Caring for Her Bedridden Mother*, Wendy J. Menara reveals the rare perspective of a child living in the shadow of death, caring for a chronically ill parent who had multiple sclerosis. She shares episodes of her life caring for her bedridden mother and the heartbreak at age thirteen of losing that parent. It's a story of resilience—when the role of the caretaker and the cared for are prematurely reversed, there is no choice but to become a responsible adult long before growing up.

ENDORSEMENTS

A powerful read. Wendy's turbulent childhood is packed with joyful moments and her relationships with those around her are lively and dynamic...but she also faces sorrow and tragedy in equal measure. *Silence of Shame* also teaches lessons about living with disease. Wendy doesn't leave anything out of this unflinching memoir, and her attempt to leave no stone unturned and reveal all the shame and stigma her family faced pays off. There were moments that made me laugh and cry, and I will definitely be re-reading this again in the future.

— **Madison Butz, National Multiple Sclerosis Society**

This is an eloquently recounted and heartbreaking story—readers will admire Menara's honesty, although her willingness to describe the most intimate details of her caregiving duties may prove too frank for some tastes. Illustrated with family photographs throughout, the memoir closes with an unexpected revelation and offers a message of hope and healing that will be of value to others who have faced similar circumstances.

— **Kirkus Reviews (starred review)**

I highly recommend reading this memoir to understand the bonds of a family, even in the worst of times, and to also provide courage to anyone suffering similarly, that life can take a turn for the better. All families have secrets and deal with them in a variety of ways. Some go to the graves with those who have hidden them, while others bubble to the top in ways that can't be avoided. To find the courage to absorb these secrets, process them, and apply them to our lives—hopefully in a positive way—is a blessing. I applaud Wendy for her bravery in putting her memories to paper, so others may find comfort in knowing they aren't alone and there is a path to acceptance and forgiveness.

— **Linda Palmer, Director/Producer, Runaway Films**

THE BOOK ENCOURAGES CONVERSATIONS ABOUT:

- Handling anxiety, grief, long-held secrets
- Abusive relationships
- Battling shame & fear of the unknown
- Recovering from trauma
- Caregiving and caregivers
- Planning for the care of aging parents or loved ones who may be ill or have special needs

WHY IS IT RELEVANT?

- All of us struggle with feelings of shame and guilt.
- Millions of Americans are in abusive relationships or recovering from one.
- Millions of people carry shameful secrets. This story provides insight on how to overcome and deal with the stigma of shame and family secrets.
- The story provides important context around how children are affected by the loss of a parent at an early age and even into adulthood.
- Wendy's story sheds light on the effects of witnessing physical abuse and how watching this abuse renders the bystander child with feelings of helplessness and fear.
- Nationwide, there are approximately 1.3 to 1.4 million child caregivers who are between the ages of 8 and 18. Of the 28.4 million caregiving households that have a child 8 to 18 years of age living there, 3.2 percent, or 906,000 households, include a child caregiver (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2005).
- An estimated 1.5 million kids lose both parents by age 15.