

## 2006 NWA Nonfiction

### Contest Critique

#### *"Better Off Bald"*

by Andrea J. Wilson

**MANUSCRIPT FORMAT:** This manuscript was properly formatted. I found some small errors, which are marked in pencil directly on the manuscript.

**OVERALL APPEARANCE:** Once again, well formatted, and the appearance was neat.

**TITLE:** I found the title to be reflective of the subject matter.

**IS THE WORK INTERESTING:** I found this manuscript to be very compelling. A friend of mine died from cancer when I was fourteen, and it made a profound impact on me. Being young and ignorant, I never really stopped to consider what the day to day was like for her, and this provided much needed insight. Some people might find the subject matter to be depressing, but showing humor, and the way that you and your sister handled this makes a bold statement about what you and your sister were made of. It takes guts to face a terminal illness, whether it be you or a loved one. I believe that you portrayed the subject in the best manner you possibly could, an honest one.

**IS THE IDEA FRESH:** Yes. As you and I both know, there are a ton of books out there on cancer. The way that you present this is really what makes it fresh. Using your sister's journal entries to help show the audience how she felt at the time is a great idea. I read a book a while back that reminded me of this work in some ways. The title was *Travelling Light*, and although the circumstances were different, the pulling on my heartstrings was identical.

**BEGINNING/LEAD:** Fantastic job with your hook! I was automatically drawn in, and interested to find out what was wrong with Adrienne. I went to my fair share of rock concerts as a teenager, arrived back with ample bruises, and received little, if any, pity from my parents because of it. Because of this, anyone reading this work can relate to the personalities of both you and your sister. Not once was I bored, which is a massive compliment considering how many entries I have read for this contest.

**MATERIAL SIGNIFICANCE:** When reading your outline, I came to realize just how many people this book can help. Teenagers dealing with cancer can feel like they are not the only ones feeling the way they do. Parents of teenagers with cancer can read it, and perhaps get a better understanding of what their child is going through. Just as important, friends of teenagers with cancer can get much needed knowledge that just because their friend is physically ill, they are still mentally intact, which I am not sure all of them seem to understand.

**QUALITY OF RESEARCH:** What better research can one have than to live it? The information provided is conveyed in a simple manner, and is woven into the story without distracting the reader.

**DOES THE AUTHOR GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS SUBJECT:** Yes.

**EMOTIONAL APPEAL:** This shows the range of emotion that goes with any terminal disease. Even though I only got to read the first chapter, I cried right along with you when Adrienne was diagnosed. My only complaint was that I didn't get to read the whole manuscript.

**DOES THE WORK TEACH, ENTERTAIN, ETC.:** I found this to be both educational and entertaining. Although I know that this is nonfiction, you made it read like fiction, which is no small task.

**VIEWPOINT:** You did an excellent job of staying in viewpoint, and I didn't find one place where you wavered. That is not easy to do, so give yourself a pat on the back.

**WRITING STYLE:** I enjoyed your writing style, and it was well done.

**CHARACTERIZATION:** From the first page of this, I was interested in learning more about both you and your sister. You did a great job of showing each one's personality and quirks, which makes you different from everyone else.

**DESCRIPTIONS:** I suppose that this could use a bit more detail when it comes to medical references, however, I only got to read the first chapter so I could be wrong about this.

**NARRATIVE:** The narrative stayed on track.

**TRANSITION & ORGANIZATION:** The transitions are well done, and the manuscript flowed well as evidence of it.

**SALABILITY:** This is where I say to you: WOW! I have never seen such an in-depth market analysis of a book. Granted, it is one of the requirements, but usually people do not take the time to truly consider who their competition is, and how the titles are different from yours. You actually did what you were supposed to. **THANK YOU!!!** I agree with the market analysis, and think that this book is highly saleable. I do have one suggestion, which may help with the sale of this book. You might want to consider contacting Jay Leno, and seeing if he would be willing to either write the foreword to this book, or if he would be interested in reading the book, and then providing a blurb for the back jacket cover. Since Mr. Leno is a household name, and met your sister, he might be a good fit. However, if you feel that this would distract from the story, please disregard the idea.

Most of all, I wish you good luck with this work.