

Damn the Rejections, Full Speed Ahead: The Bumpy Road to Getting Published

Maralys Wills

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Reviewed by Tyler R. Tichelaar for Reader Views (11/08)

Maralys Wills has written some successful books, but I had never heard of her until I read this fascinating, entertaining, and informative guide to writing and publishing. Among Wills' best-known books is "Higher Than Eagles" about her son, an accomplished hang glider, who unfortunately died pursuing his passion. I admittedly have no interest in reading any of her other books because I am simply not interested in the topics, but I mean that as a compliment because I found "Damn the Rejections, Full Speed Ahead" to be full of wonderful information, for beginners and accomplished authors, no matter what type of writing they do.

With all respect to Wills, her writing career has spanned a long time. She does not give her age but she remembers the start of World War II. She has been writing and teaching writing many years, and she has published fourteen books. I have read many books about writing, and many autobiographies of writers, but I don't know anyone who has blended the two together in such a coherent and readable format. Many authors have written wonderful guides about how to write—Ayn Rand and E.M. Forster come to mind—others have written books about how the publication process works—James A. Michener—and others have tried to separate life and writing into two parts of one book—Stephen King's "On Writing." All these books have value as a guide to writers, but none of them have so perfectly blended writing and publishing advice with autobiography.

Maralys Wills has carried us through her entire publishing career, telling us what she learned along the way with relevant examples, allowing us to see her progression as a writer, to feel her rejections, and to cheer her publishing offers. Even her chapter on small writing goofs, a chapter to benefit beginning writers, had many points in it that polished writers will find instructive. And accomplished writers will find her an equal to empathize with, seeing their own experiences in many of hers.

Wills describes herself as a genre-hopper; she has written a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, from party books to romance novels to a memoir and now a book on writing. She knows her genre-hopping has caused difficulties for her career, but readers of "Damn the Rejections, Full Speed Ahead" will only benefit from the variety of useful advice she offers.

"Damn the Rejections, Full Speed Ahead" was in many ways similar to taking a tour of the history of publishing through the last several decades. Wills remembers the days of preparing manuscripts on typewriters—a frustrating experience I am grateful only to have dealt with for a very short time. She has sold books to traditional larger publishers; then, she moved to smaller presses as the industry

changed, and even self-published a book. The only information I felt lacking in her book was a more contemporary discussion on the current state of publishing and the role of self-publishing in today's marketplace, as well as the importance and increased role of authors marketing their own books.

While I learned much from reading "Damn the Rejections, Full Speed Ahead," I did not expect to be entertained so much by Wills' vibrant voice, her enthusiasm, snippets of her dialogue with her husband, and to relate so well to her feelings about being rejected and the joy of finally having a book accepted. May Wills experience "Full Speed Ahead" in many writing and publishing ventures to come, and as would be her wish, so may her readers.