

Sandy Reay, Author

March 2023 Newsletter

Luck.

I believe in planning and hard work, but nothing beats dumb luck.



Two Career Failures

When I was in my 20s (1970s), I worked as a draftsman. A secretary and I were the only women in the building. She wore silver-hair sprayed into short stiff curls, starched dresses with floral prints, and long-sleeved matching sweaters like capes. I wore jeans, cotton-knit shirts, and tennis shoes.

My drafting table was in the office at the other end of the hall. The geologists assigned to the other desks in the room spent their days out in the field, writing in notebooks, collecting data for me to draw.

One day, Charles, a man from another office, shuffled into my office holding a camera. Remember Tim Conway's old man on the Carol Burnett show? That was Charles speeded up. I stopped drawing and put my chin in my hand, waiting for him to speak.

“Do something sexy.”

Sexy? Me? Oh, he was serious. I licked my lips.

He snapped a few pictures. I went back to drawing pictures of core samples at different elevations.

A few months later, Charles shuffled in with a trophy. “We won first prize.”

He handed me the picture.

“For that?!?” I think I yelled.

“Yes.” He smiled and held up the trophy with a camera and “First Prize” in big letters.

I put the photo down, and he let me hold the trophy. It had “Humor division” in small letters. My career as a model ended.

One of our projects was collecting data about water levels in a canyon near a ski area. My boss gave me access to our computer and a book about how to use the writing/editing program—it was nothing like Word. I took the user manual home and read it cover to cover. I became the resident editor expert.

I'd taken two night classes in computer programming: Basic, then Fortran. Some of my drafting work was repetitive: vertical rectangles divided into smaller boxes. With help from one of the computer experts, I wrote a Fortran program to draft the boxes. It lacked all the details I drew, but it was a start. With less than two hours of data entry, I could run my program and see the results on the monitor. Because we rented time on a computer in a different city, I had to wait one work day to have the printed results delivered—about the same amount of time it would take me to draft one page. If I refined my program, I could have it create a more complex design in far less data-entry time and improve productivity.

Excited about this breakthrough, I showed my boss.

“It'll never catch on.” He took away my user id.

I took another night class. My career as a draftsman ended when I found a job as a programmer.

The Sinister Umbrella

I'm writing **The Sinister Umbrella**, a novel about a young woman whose life is destroyed in a car accident and her struggle to build a new life. It's a young-adult horror story, with a twist (or three). There's more info on my website. Just click on the link above.

I think first drafts let me explore who the characters are and allow them to tell me what happens next. The new chapters surprised me. So did the new characters. I have seven chapters critiqued and five more written. My alpha readers seem to like it, and send helpful comments.

It's not too late to become an alpha reader. If you haven't read the first five now-edited chapters and want to, reply and tell me “I want to read SU.” Then you can tell me what to write and why. Critique comment at the end of chapter 7: **This is good stuff. It's like you upped your game overnight.**

My monthly (I hope) email.

“Whatever day of the month is still monthly.”—the “chronically-late” Sandy Reay. I worked on my author web site: new content this week! Yesterday, I wrote the keeper bridge to a song. I've been stuck on that bridge since 2012. I edited it, again, this morning. So close ...

If you wish to unsubscribe, please reply and put “unsubscribe” in the subject or text. I won't send another. Unless you reply after the next monthly email, which should be around the time of the April Spring blizzard. **If you want to read past newsletters,** check out [Archives](#).

Necessary blah blah

I add content to my website at random intervals. Check out [my author website](#) to see what's new on the home page. For those of you who are worried about the “Not Secure” message at the top: that means I didn't pay for a certificate because I don't do online commerce. All my websites display information. I don't collect or save your information **unless you choose to email me.** (I've been building web sites since 1998; I keep 'em simple and watch out for suspicious files on my server.)

[Sandy Reay, Author](#)—ideas to encourage creativity, where to find inspiration, short stories, micro & flash fiction, true stories, works in progress, and a long-overdue memoir

[Colorado Sandstorm Music](#)—songs and poems written and co-written by “Sandy Reay and Friends” with an online Cowboy Poetry Book: [Another Horse to Saddle](#)

[Colorado Sandstorm Productions](#)—info about all the other websites plus concerts and songwriting workshops by national touring songwriters, including Buddy Mondlock and Dan Navarro. Hint: Buddy and Dan will be back this summer for concerts and songwriting workshops. Keep watching this site.

[AcousticByLines](#)—when and where you can see/hear musicians, co-writers, and Sandy (sometimes)

[YouTube Sandy Reay and Friends songs and poems](#)

Follow Me on Facebook:

[Sandy Reay, Author](#)

[Colorado Sandstorm Music](#)

[AcousticByLines](#)

[Crash the Collie](#)