# After fiancé's death, a writer travels with 'Ghosts'

**Sharon Peters** 

Special for USA TODAY

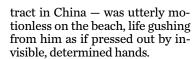
Frolicking in the sea with her fiancé on the island of Ko Pha Ngan, Thailand, Shannon Leone



Fowler, California girl, marine biologist, devotee of all things ocean-related, had begun to rethink their dinner plans.

She now wanted to carve out some time for lovemaking in their sweltering little room before tending to the more mundane matter of fueling their bellies.

Seconds later her sunny-tempered, blue-eyed Aussie – an adventuresome world traveler who recently had concluded a short-term teaching con-



Traveling with Ghosts (Simon & Schuster, 294 pp., ★★★ out of four) is Fowler's memoir of the hours, days and months after her beloved Sean died moments after being stung by a jellyfish, upending every plan she had for her future, leaving her alone to deal with the bureaucratic regulations of getting his body home, and try-

ing to come to grips at age 28 with a loss so huge unexpected.

Fowler, fiercely independent and highly competent, was completely unmoored once she had tended to the many complications of delivering Sean's body to



**Shannon Fowler with Sean in** Shanghai.

his parents in Australia and then returning to her parents in California. There was research work awaiting her. There were old friends who wanted to help. None of it had any meaning.

And so she traveled. Alone. To Eastern Europe in the grimy grimness of fall and winter, to places where tourists were rare.

the language was impenetrable and there was little comfort to be had. She'd traveled solo in remote areas often - had, in fact, met Sean years earlier while backpacking through Spain. But this was different. She was different.

And she couldn't stand to be near the ocean any longer.

She spent long days in small towns in Hungary, shuffling through the streets, disoriented by grief. She passed Sean's birthday alone in Gyor near the Slovakian border sitting on her creaky dorm bed and drinking a toast to him with a bottle of a thick, antiseptic-tasting Hungarian digestive drink. She traveled to Slovakia and Poland, where there were long evenings in cheap bars, rarely speaking to anyone.

Fowler recorded it all in her journal. Somehow her lifelong pattern of taking note of the amusing and the quirky while traveling overrode her dark dance

with despondency. She felt none of her usual joy, but it was a kind of medicine she choked down that finally made her better.

She even, eventually, made her peace with the sea.

Her various journeys through grief, through areas of the world few experience and through memories of adventures that made her who she was and Sean who he was — are movingly and honestly told.

Fowler shows none of the selfaggrandizement that saturates many memoirs, and she lived a far more interesting life — before and after Sean's death — than do many who write about theirs.

Her story – rich, unblinking and adroitly told - is one of strength, of getting past but not getting over. Few would choose the approach Fowler took to kickstart healing. But hers is a thought-provoking journey that she generously shares.

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- mater Grow like ivy
- **69** Act the epicure
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- 27 39 64 24 Started a hand
  - 70 Gridderturned-actor **Bradshaw**

### **DOWN**

- 1 LBJ part Roll call notation
- "Holy" city 4 Many
- (multicolored) Popular vodka
- brand, for short "Exodus" hero
- Ben Canaan 7 Monopoly deed figure
- Sax type played by
- 9 "Ghostbusters" gunk
- 10 Useful data, briefly 11 Cheese at pizza
- parlors 12 Forty-niner's pay
- 13 Just for Men offering
- 18 Herb with a licoricelike flavor 19 Sloppy digs

- Finish second, perhaps 28 Floored it
- 30 Quinnipiac surveys 32 Eris' path
- **33** Vice 35 Diminutive in rappers' names
- **36** Elusive Himalayans Beachgoer's acquisition 38 Only
- Just Begun" (Carpenters hit) BASI **39** Merino mothers 40 Where a

sailboat may

- run aground \_ off (wrote hurriedly) 47 Beer following
- a shot 48 Harder to believe, as tales go 49 Nodding off,

maybe

51 Flattery in verse

Today's theme

- 52 Perfected, as a skill
- Civilian garb Right on the money Name in polo shirts Any of the Simpsons

Add to the staff

**62** Put coins into, as a

63 Result of a sac fly

**64** Number on a driver

meter

- Wednesday's Answer
- **CROSSWORDS** ON YOUR PHONE mobilegames.usatoday.com

**WORD ROUNDUP** 

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Find and Circle: Seven Asian countries Four mollusks Two words formed from A-M-R-S

Two opposing directions Guide at a theater Wednesday's answer: DECEMBER OCTOBER APRIL JUNE / TEXAS MAINE IDAHO / OSCAR EMMY TONY / TEAM WALK BUNT / CASHEW

(LCAMBODIAVLM SAEASTIJAITA UMOVIETNAMSL PAZSSUINDCEA ¯□ •ORXMVHSCDIWY CAMUSSELEAKI

**QUICKCROSS** By John Wilmes 7/20 Singer Stefani On the air \_\_ of March Ernie's pal Smooth-talking **Broad** Always W E P T

(Hornet's [?) egg]

QUICKCROSS

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<sup>₹</sup>OMONGOLIARMA **UP & DOWN WORDS** By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt Clues: Wednesday's Answer CONTACT 1. Delighted MAKE CONTACT 2. Pastel beverage PAPER 3. Front-yard business PAPER BAG BAG LUNCH 5. Without plan or intent LUNCH **BREAK** 

**SUDOKU** 

HARD

I S A K

|G||Y||M||S

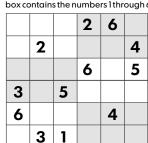
DIFFICULTY RATING 食食食食公 SUDOKU FUSION

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

**BREAK** 

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**DOWN** 



6. Monopoly feature

7. Bridge, for example

DIFFICULTY RATING 食食食食

5	3	4	2	1	8	6	9	7	2	5	6	3	1	4
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1	7	9	4	6		3			6	2	3	5	4	1
2	4	6	8	3	5	7	1	9	4	6	5	1	3	2
7	2	1	3	8	9	5	6	4	-	-	-	•	-	_
8	6	5	7	2	4	9	3	1	3	1	2	4	5	6

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