

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 love-making 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 adventure-some world traveler who recently had concluded a short-term teaching con-

tract in China — was utterly motionless on the beach, life gushing from him as if pressed out by invisible, determined hands.

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 trying to come to grips at age 28 with a loss so huge and 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 grime 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, anti-septic-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 self-aggrandizement 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 kick-start healing. But hers is a thought-provoking journey that she generously shares.

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PUZZLES

CROSSWORD

BY Vic Fleming

TRIP-ILES

ACROSS

- 1 Places for rubber duckies
- 6 Partner of crafts
- 10 Jogger's source of music, perhaps
- 14 Give or take
- 15 Bit of angling gear
- 16 ___ a soul (no one)
- 17 Theme song from "The Quiet Man"
- 20 Turntable need
- 21 Part of a drum kit
- 22 Word after bitter or dead
- 23 Like Sen. Sanders
- 25 Fernando of "The French Connection"
- 26 "The Big Easy" of pro golf
- 29 Telegram sentence ender
- 31 Prefix meaning "modern"
- 33 Brandy bottle letters
- 34 Owner of an infamous cow
- 37 Give a "big hair" look to
- 38 "Amazing!"
- 42 Tom of "State Fair"
- 43 Offspring of Gaia
- 44 Skein shapes
- 45 Woody Herman's ___ Autumn
- 46 Takes measures
- 50 Suffix with lion or baron
- 51 Unit symbolized by an omega
- 54 "___ Hate Me" (Spike Lee movie)
- 56 Rogue computer of sci-fi
- 57 Went underground, in a way
- 60 Let out a sigh, say
- 62 Where to find Eggo waffles
- 65 River through Catalonia
- 66 Prince Harry's alma mater
- 67 Grow like ivy
- 68 Went kaput
- 69 Act the epicure

DOWN

- 1 LBJ part
- 2 Roll call notation
- 3 "Holy" city
- 4 Many-___ (multicolored)
- 5 Popular vodka brand, for short
- 6 "Exodus" hero ___ Ben Canaan
- 7 Monopoly deed figure
- 8 Sax type played by Clinton
- 9 "Ghostbusters" gunk
- 10 Useful data, briefly
- 11 Cheese at pizza parlors
- 12 Forty-niner's pay dirt
- 13 Just for Men offering
- 18 Herb with a licoricelike flavor
- 19 Sloppy digs
- 24 Started a hand
- 27 Finish second, perhaps
- 28 Floored it
- 30 Quin nipiac surveys
- 32 Eris' path
- 33 Vice ___
- 35 Diminutive in rappers' names
- 36 Elusive Himalayans
- 37 Beachgoer's acquisition
- 38 "___ Only Just Begun" (Carpenters hit)
- 39 Merino mothers
- 40 Where a sailboat may run aground
- 41 ___ off (wrote hurriedly)
- 47 Beer following a shot
- 48 Harder to believe, as tales go
- 49 Nodding off, maybe
- 51 Flattery in verse
- 52 Perfected, as a skill
- 53 Civilian garb
- 55 Right on the money
- 58 Name in polo shirts
- 59 Any of the Simpsons
- 61 Add to the staff
- 62 Put coins into, as a meter
- 63 Result of a sac fly
- 64 Number on a driver

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WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 7/20

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 ALMOND

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 7/20

Singer Stefani
On the air
The ___ of March
Ernie's pal
Smooth-talking
Broad
Always
(Hornet's ?) egg

Wednesday's Answer
WEPT HARD ISAK GYMS

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
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7/19

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

9		5		4				
1	8		2	7				
				8	2		1	
	3	9						6
7			6					5
5						3	2	
9	5		2					
			9	1		5	4	
7			3				6	

7/20 DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

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UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 7/20

1. TICKLED

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Clues:
1. Delighted
2. Pastel beverage
3. Front-yard business
4. Movie: "___ Me"
5. Without plan or intent
6. Monopoly feature
7. Bridge, for example

Wednesday's Answer
MAKE CONTACT PAPER BAG LUNCH BREAK DOWN IN CONTACT PAPER BAG LUNCH BREAK DOWN IN

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

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DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

Wednesday's Answers

5	3	4	2	1	8	6	9	7
6	8	2	5	9	7	1	4	3
9	1	7	6	4	3	2	5	8
3	5	8	9	1	4	2	6	3
1	7	9	4	6	2	3	8	5
2	4	6	8	3	5	7	1	9
7	2	1	3	8	9	5	6	4
8	6	5	7	2	4	9	3	1
4	9	3	1	5	6	8	7	2

7/19

TXTPERT

Across: 1. 8723342, 2. 2953, 5. 287, 8. 227, 8. 3274, 9. 28449
Down: 1. 8473, 2. 2953, 3. 2427747, 5. 2639, 6. 222, 7. 744

Today's theme: **Transport**

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C... and 5678 could be LOST

Yesterday's solution

DON'T QUOTE ME

English prime minister Winston Churchill offers this definition.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
CHANGE FANATIC MIND ONE SUBJECT WHO WON'T

“A _____ IS _____ CAN'T _____ HIS _____ AND _____ CHANGE THE _____”

7/20

Wednesday's Answer: "Without ice cream, there would be darkness and chaos." - Don Kardong