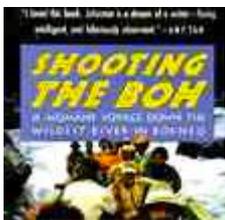


Author writes disappointing whitewater travel book

By Kathryn Reed

Travel adventure books written by journalists are often hard for me to criticize.

Not so with “Shooting the Boh: A woman’s voyage down the wildest river in Borneo,” which was first published in 1992.



It has all the makings of a great story. And told by someone else, it probably was or would be. The problem with this version of the excursion is that author Tracy Johnston seems to spend more time talking about her bout with hot flashes in the rain forest than about running this wild river for the first time by anyone.

Johnston doesn’t paint a picture of harmony on the water, yet at the end she said a bond had been formed. It is hard to believe this.

She also says others wrote about the excursion, including one of the guides. Though I have not read other accounts of the trip, I would hope they would be better even if the authors don’t have a writing background.

Plenty of travel pieces have the author inserted throughout the copy. But usually it adds to the writing, instead of distracts. Though I don’t know what having menopause is like, I didn’t need to read about it ad nauseam. A reference or two is relevant to point to her state of mind.

It’s interesting that she writes that whining was not a big part of the trip despite the unexpected length of it, the need for food rationing, and the constant buzzing of bees. But she

must have been whining in her journal to be able to come up with the 256-page paperback.

If you can get through her hot flashes without tossing the book aside, the river experience in this (at least at the time) untamed part of the world gives readers a glimpse of a river with rapids and challenges that are harrowing and at times shocking to realize they lived through the experience.