

Publisher's Weekly(boxed)

The Horse Boy: A Father's Quest to Heal His Son Rupert Isaacson. Little, Brown, \$24.99 (352p) ISBN 978-0-316-00823-5

In this intense, polished account, the Austin, Tex., parents of an autistic boy trek to the Mongolian steppes to consult shamans in a last-ditch effort to alter his unraveling behavior. Author Isaacson (*The Healing Land*) and his wife, Kristin, a psychology professor, were told that the developmental delays of their young son, Rowan, were caused by autism. Floored, the parents scrambled to find therapy, which was costly and seemed punitive, when Isaacson, an experienced rider and trainer of horses from his youth in England, hoisted Rowan up in the saddle with him and took therapeutic rides on Betsy, the neighbor's horse. The repetitive rocking and balance stimulation boosted Rowan's language ability; inspired by the results, as well as encouraged by such experts as Temple Grandin and Isaacson's own experience working with African shamans, Isaacson hit on the self-described crazy idea of taking Rowan to the original horse people, the Mongolians, and find shamans who could help heal their son. The family went in July, accompanied conveniently by a film crew and van, which five-year-old Rowan often refused to leave, and over several rugged weeks rode up mountains, forded rivers and camped, while enduring strange shamanic ceremonies. Isaacson records heartening improvement in Rowan's firestormlike tantrums and incontinence, as he taps into an ancient, valuable form of spirit healing. (*Apr.*)