

seamstress Agnes Richter, a 19th-century mental patient who painstakingly embroidered story after story onto her jacket, using it as an example of how countless patients' stories have been lost through the years. The author then introduces successful individuals and groups—like the fascinating Hearing Voices Network—that have carved out paths to wellness, or at least some degree of acceptance, outside the medical and psychiatric mainstream. Yet these informative descriptions are too often derailed by the author's scientific prejudices.

Despite Hornstein's assurance that she wants "real debates about mental illness, not just ideological grandstanding," the latter is precisely what we get.

Isaacson, Rupert

THE HORSE BOY: A Father's

Quest to Heal His Son

Little, Brown (352 pp.)

\$24.99

CD \$29.98

Apr. 2, 2009

ISBN: 978-0-316-00823-5

CD 978-1-60024-542-8

A father goes to great and treacherous lengths to "cure" his autistic son.

Texas-based travel writer Isaacson met wife Kristin while traveling through India on assignment. The birth of their son Rowan in 2001 joyfully coincided with their seven-year anniversary. It wasn't long, however, before Kristin, a child-development psychologist, recognized early deficiencies in Rowan, as well as intermittent tantrums and mood swings that quickly increased in severity and regularity. After Rowan was diagnosed with autism at two-and-a-half, both parents considered various behavioral interventions. Some promised a possible recovery while others—chemical detoxification, viral therapy, diet modification—seemed overly radical. Only rushed trips into the forest seemed to quell Rowan's rages, which by age three had become a daily occurrence. The boy had a one-time positive response to healers and shamans from a delegation of Kalahari Bushmen Isaacson knew from his years in Africa. Rowan also demonstrated an extraordinary connection with animals, specifically with Betsy, an aging mare who genuflected in uncharacteristic "voluntary obeisance" whenever she was in the boy's presence. In learning to ride Betsy, even Rowan's verbal skills improved. Putting all these pieces together, the author proposed to a reluctant Kristin that they backpack and ride horses across Mongolia, integrating Rowan with the faith and trance healers of the "horse people" who lived there. Together with their guide Tulga, the Isaacsons experienced unorthodox rituals, mineral springs and exotic edible delicacies (fermented mare's milk, bloody "boiled and quivering" sheep's lung). They navigated the hilly terrain of the Mongolian steppe and, after a grueling nine-hour ascent into the mountains of southern Siberia, met Ghoste, a powerful Siberian shaman. By this stage in his quest, however, Isaacson begins to sound like a dangerously focused extremist. His determination in seeking normalcy for his son was honorable, but the dangerous situations he was willing to put his family in to achieve this goal are disturbing.

Breathtaking atmosphere, solid prose and stunning cultural observations can't obscure troubling parental desperation and skewed priorities. (Agent: Elizabeth Sheinkman/Curtis Brown U.K.)

Kinney, David

THE BIG ONE: An Island, an Obsession, and the Furious Pursuit of a Great Fish

Atlantic Monthly (272 pp.)

\$24.00

Apr. 1, 2009

ISBN: 978-0-8021-1890-5

Reporter and longtime fisherman Kinney casts out for the Northeastern coast's oldest fishing tournament.

The author looks beyond Martha's Vineyard's reputation as a summer hangout for the fabulously wealthy to capture its salty roots, motley inhabitants and resident anglers, viewing them through the portal of a fishing derby. Once a sedate, rural community of farmers and commercial fishermen, the Vineyard was basically off the radar until 1946, when a PR representative for the island's failing ferry service came up with the perfect hype to stimulate tourism: the five-week-long Martha's Vineyard Striped Bass and Bluefish Derby. Since its inception, the tournament has survived controversy, major fish decline and generations of obsessed enthusiasts. "The derby," writes Kinney, "is a lottery ticket, an ego boost, a chance to die happy, a shot at island renown and modest riches, a chance to win." From Wampanoag charter captain Buddy Vanderhoop and taxidermist Janet Messineo to the Menemsha Kids and the Wharf Rats, Kinney details the dozens of colorful personalities involved in the annual drama. Hopping among history, on-the-ground action and personal narrative, much of the story centers around five-time derby champ Lev Wlodyka and his prize catch, a 50-plus-pound striped bass that caused an imbroglio when judges cut it open and discovered a bellyful of weights. Through brawls, fish tales and territoriality, Vineyarders get emotional about their derby and their landscape. As the derby rules change, the "year-rounders" face the changes to their once-quiet island that, with the influx of rich outsiders, threaten to transform the Vineyard into another Hamptons.

With solid prose, Kinney nails the character of this spirited community and its defining anima, the striped bass. (Agent: Larry Weissman/Larry Weissman Literary)

Kitto, Mark

CHASING CHINA:

How I Lost a Fortune and Found a Life in Shanghai

Skyhorse Publishing (304 pp.)

\$22.95

Apr. 1, 2009

ISBN: 978-1-60239-657-9

An amusing, helter-skelter memoir by a Welsh publishing entrepreneur who found a quiet niche in China.

After traveling there in 1998, Kitto created the popular, short-lived *that's Shanghai* series of magazines, modeled on London's *Timeout* and inspired by H.E. Morriss's *North-China Daily News*, which was closed by the Communists in 1951. His success rankled the Chinese bureaucracy, and after seven years in business he was shut down, marked a "Muslim separatist sympathizer" and forced into a long lawsuit over trademarks and a new career as a writer and cook. The first half of this disjointed work barely mentions the publishing business, instead dwelling on his discovery of a mountaintop retreat in Moganshan, a Victorian-era resort several hours outside of Shanghai where Europeans flocked in the summer and Communist leaders used as a haven for secret liaisons. Eventually Kitto, married to a Cantonese woman, leased and fixed up a secluded, terraced house in the town, cajoling and greasing the palms of contractors, workers and bureaucrats whose MO was routinely the response, *Mei banfa* ("there is no way" or "You'll just have to live with it"). Between putting out fires (literally), throwing an obsequious banquet and digging up hairy bamboo (*maozhu*), the town's specialty, Kitto offers an ample history of Moganshan from colonial