

Curiosity got the cats, into the library

By LAURIE SLOTHOWER
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SHE'S THE first one in the Felton Library every morning. She's fond of sitting under an empty desk. And when she needed minor surgery last year, the patrons took up a collection to pay for it.

Pearl Ann, the official feline at the Felton Library, will never have a library card, but patrons at the library are happy to share their books and their laps with her.

"All the patrons love her — she's our kitty," offers librarian Barbara Kiehl. "Every now and then, a patron will give me a dollar and say it's for cat food."

Pearl Ann is the second cat to take up quarters in the library. She follows in the paw prints of Priscilla Ann, who lived at the library for almost eight years, Kiehl said.

Practically everyone in town knew Priscilla. She was a gregarious cat who liked to perch atop the circulation desk, where passersby could pet her and admire her fine tortoise-shell coat.

"She was a wonderful, mellow cat who loved people," Kiehl said.

Priscilla "went to kitty heaven," as Kiehl puts it, about two years ago. Kiehl decided having a cat was too much trouble, and had given away all her cans of cat food when one day she came to work and found a gray tabby kitten sitting on the steps outside.

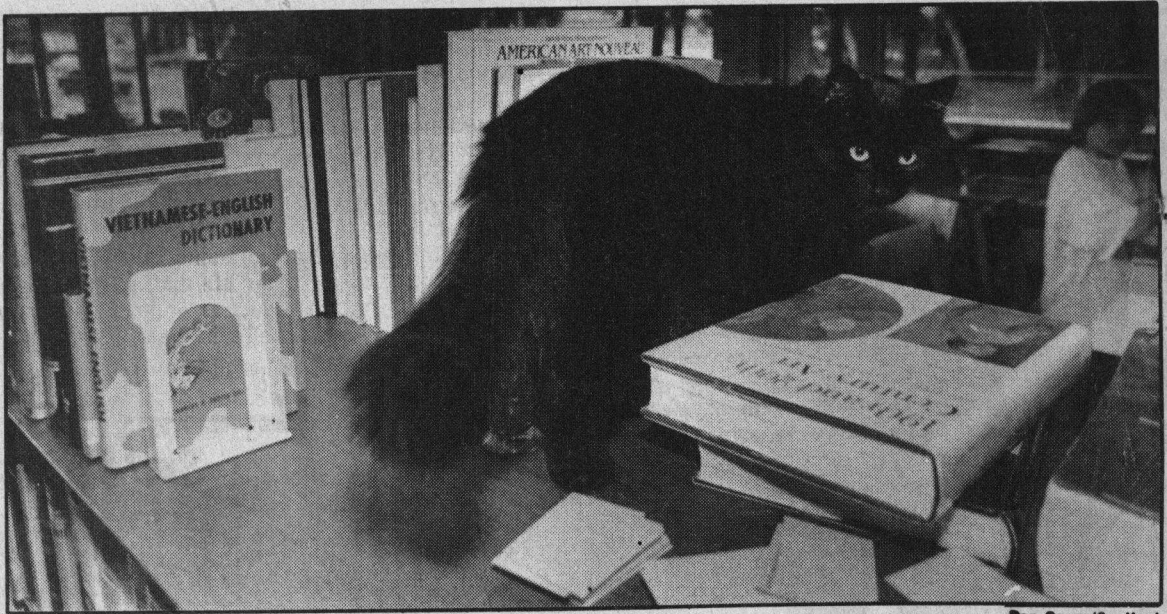
Keihl said to a library volunteer that she didn't want a cat, and anyway, she didn't have any food. The volunteer produced a can of cat food from her car and another library patron found a Swiss Army knife to open it and before she knew it, Kiehl had another cat on her (and the library's) hands.

Pearl Ann is more reserved than her predecessor, Kiehl says, and saves her affections for selected people and selective moments. She goes in and out as she pleases.

Pearl has never shown any inclination to leave, Keihl said. "I think she likes the ambiance here, in this old building."

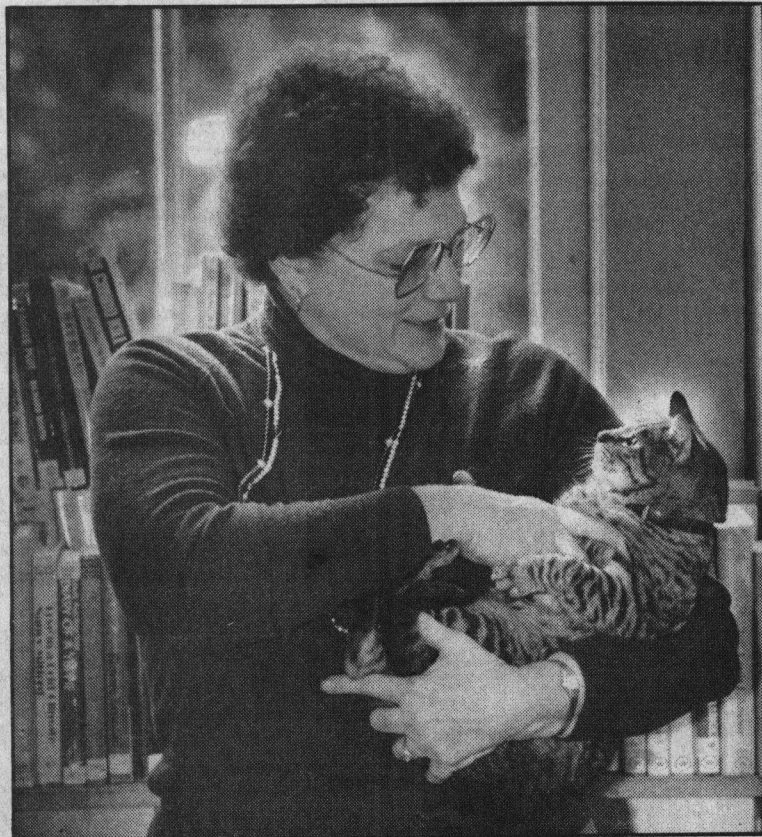
Last year, when she needed to be spayed, Kiehl put a sign in the library asking for donations for "Pearl Ann's surgery."

"The people of Felton were



Don Coyro/Sentinel

Orfeo leads a rather bookish life at Branciforte Library.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Pearl Ann has endeared herself to librarian Barbara Kiehl and all who visit Felton Library.

very generous," Keihl said.

It's a Tale of Two Kitties over at Branciforte Library, where patrons are treated to daily visits from Calica and Orfeo.

The all-black cat and his calico

housemate belong to the Teswar Duenas family who live at 727 Hanover St., behind the library. Since last month, the two cats have wandered in and out of Branciforte Library all day, despite

the efforts of staff to shoo them away.

"You go to put the cat out the back door and he comes right back in the front," said librarian Alverda Orlando. "We've tried to keep them out, but it's just impossible."

Library staff can be forgiven if they haven't tried too hard to get rid of the cats. They sleep in patrons' laps; they take naps on the circulation desk; they entertain children during story hour. They are, Orlando says, "very endearing."

"One day, the children's librarian was telling a story about cats and Orfeo them walked into the room at just the right time," Orlando said.

"The kids had an assignment to draw cat, and the kitty made sure they had all the right parts."

Another time Orfeo jumped up on the lap of an elderly woman who was visiting the library from a nearby convalescent home, Orlando said. "She looked startled, and then she smiled and started petting the cat."

Then there's the time Orfeo took all the Kleenex from a box on Orlando's desk and made a nest of it in her chair. "And he looked so comfortable I couldn't move him."

Go ahead. Say it. He looked so ... cute.

Branciforte librarians say the cats started making their rounds last month. They aren't sure why. Maybe curiosity got the cats.