

Big season for felines

"Cats here, cats there, cats and kittens everywhere" seems to be the device of many authors of books for children this fall as in Wanda Gag's immortal, "Millions of Cats." One of the best-looking stylized picture books for the nursery and kindergarten age—a book which is truly original and simply written though not held to a limited vocabulary — is *MY VERY OWN SPECIAL PARTICULAR PRIVATE AND PERSONAL CAT*. (Houghton Mifflin, 48 pp., \$3.75), by Sandoz Stoddard Warburg, designed and illustrated by Remy Charlip.

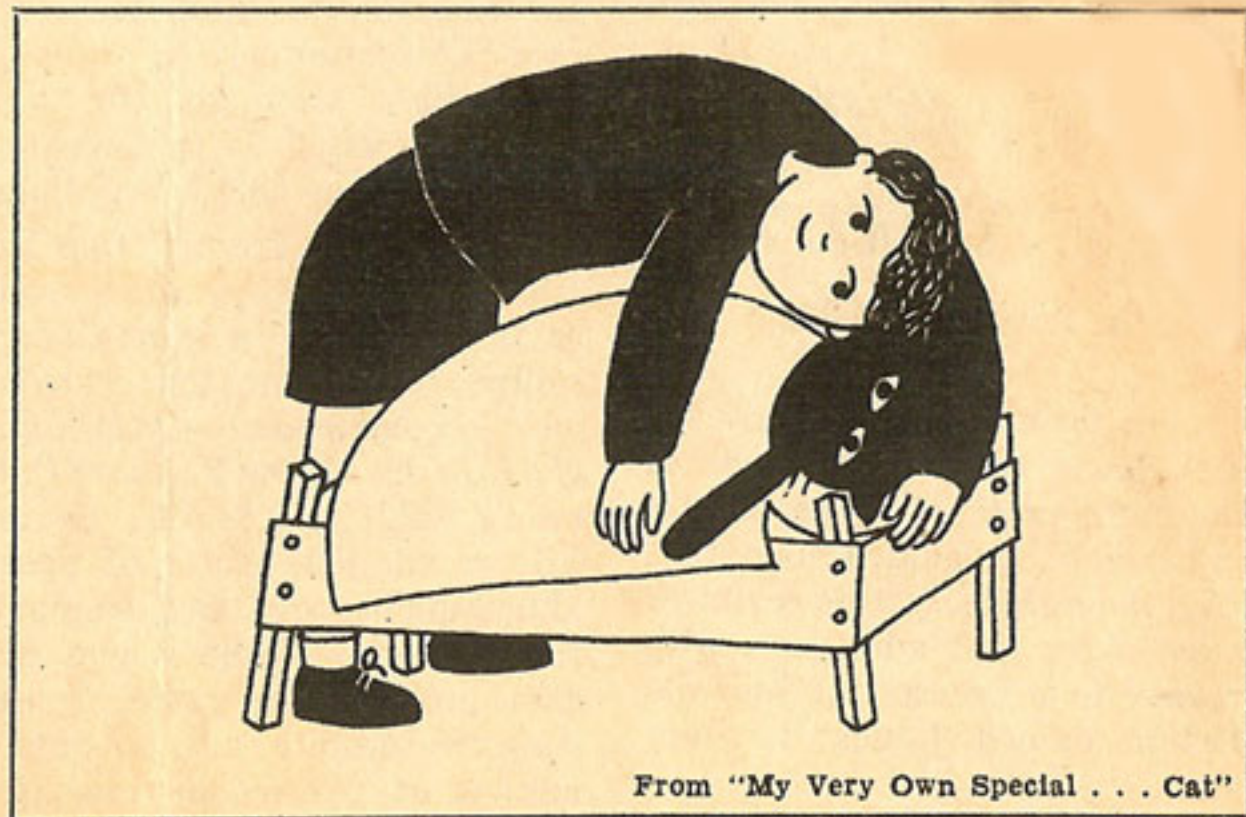
In truly poetic, unhackneyed rhyming phrases that have delightfully unusual twists to them, Mrs. Warburg has a boy talk to his cat while playing (rather inconsiderately) with him. He insists that the cat must realize, "You're mine, see . . . And you remember THAT." But the cat replies, "Oh I am the mine of me. Oh I am the Cat of Cat of Cat and YOU remember THAT." So it goes, with each insisting on his own identity and refusing to be imposed upon, until the cat—unlike Kipling's who found all things alike—admits that he will share the boy's bed at night. The almost square pages are nearly all bright yellow or orange; the pictures of the boy and the words he says are printed in plain, bold, black capital letters and the cat and his words are done in orange. Splendid tips on how to keep a cat's friendship, as well as an outstanding book.

Also for this age, and on the

same theme, is a photographic picture book about a little girl who is possessive about her cat: *MY OWN CAT* (Coward-McCann, 64 pp., \$2.50), by Marianne Gerland - Ekeroth, photographs by Gosta Nordin. In addition to these books about house cats, there are three books about alley cats—two for the picture-book group: *RICH CAT, POOR CAT* (Houghton Mifflin, 48 pp., \$3.25), written and illustrated by Bernard Waber, and *GALUMPH* (Houghton Mifflin, 48 pp., \$3), written by Brenda Lansdown and illustrated by Ernest Crichlow. The poor alley cat is envious of her pampered sisters, and her thoughts provide Bernard Waber with many ideas for comical pictures of over-indulged pussy cats before she herself is happily adopted.

Galumph keeps her independence, but at different times of the day deigns to visit four different people, each of whom gives the golden cat a different name. How they learn that she is a different cat to each of them and how all the cat lovers are finally made happy is a very slight story, but delightful because of the dashing portraits of the golden cat by Ernest Crichlow.

A splendidly independent alley cat is the hero of *MIRANDA AND THE CAT* (Little, Brown, 44 pp., \$2.75), by Linell Smith, illustrated by Peggy Bacon. It is well suited for readers of 8 or so, who like quite a bit of text with their pictures. By far the best book by this young author, this is a study of love as well as independence. Miranda becomes so fond of the fierce old alley cat—he hates and distrusts her even after she has nursed him back to life after a disaster—that she is willing to let him return to his wild street life.



From "My Very Own Special . . . Cat"

In time, however, she gets a hint of affectionate response from her patient. Peggy Bacon's fine drawings bring out all the tough scrawniness of an animal made savage and hateful by unfortunate circumstances.

Second-graders will be glad to have another easy-to-read story about David and his cat Alexander by David Cornel DeJong. The book is concerned with *LOOKING FOR ALEXANDER* (Atlantic-Little, Brown, 60 pp., \$3), until he is found on the top of the highest flagpole in town and is helped down by David, his grandmother and an ingenious use of the happy birthday umbrella. Harvey Weiss doesn't picture the rescue precisely as it is described — Alexander backed down, he didn't leap forward awkwardly—but his tan and gray pictures are lively and pleasant.

Certainly the text of *THE CAT'S OPERA* (Bobbs-Merrill, 63 pp., \$2.75), by Eilis Dillon and illustrated by Kveta Vanecek, is planned for children over 10, but its big picture-book format will make them think it is for younger children, as is the much more amus-

ing book on this theme by Mr. and Mrs. Don Freeman, "Pet of the Met." The half-Siamese, half-tiger cat Simon Boccanegra, who lives with the caretaker of an opera house, puts on a benefit performance on St. John's eve of an opera for cats which is written by a cat composer, Prosper Cattimee. Human beings can understand the language of animals on that particular night so the whole action of the opera and some arias are included in the book. Clever and cleverly worked out, but quite lacking in appeal for children and disappointing after Miss Dillon's fine adventure stories.

A FRESH LOOK AT CATS (Watts, 48 pp., \$2.50), was commissioned for the series known as "A Fresh Look At," in which various artists are allowed to choose topics and illustrate them exactly as they please. As so often happens in a series, one book is outstanding and the rest pale beside it. In this case, Abner Graboff's work is so fresh it makes you jump. Whether they like them or not, young and old will look and laugh at his gray and blue cats doing likely and unlikely things.