

Suburban Life

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Bitten by lush book about cats

By Chuck Moss
special writer

"Vavra's Cats" by Robert Vavra, William Morrow, 200 pages, \$39.95.

"The fireside tabby is merely a shrunken lion without the mane." A short quip, made by Ernest Hemingway to a young photographer. But, years later, award-winning photo-artist Robert Vavra has indeed brought out the lion in the tabby. In Detroit to see his new book, "Vavra's Cats," Vavra took a few minutes to explain how he turned the elusive feline into very real images.

"I create a mood. The photographer should be able to use his creative imagination, you see." A thin, spare man who picks his words with quiet precision, Vavra is a native Californian who lives in Europe. He has seen his children's books ranked among the best of all time, and his previous photo-essay effort "Equus" became a hot seller.

Now he sat high up in the Westin hotel, looking out at a grey world, speaking with care. "I used to be a documentary photographer and that's not art. People think 'that's just photography,' that it's not art. But a photographer can use his camera to create a mood.

"That's the book. I romantically captured the cat."

"Romance" is the correct word. "Cats" is a lush, luxurious book, a celebration of the feline mystique. There are 128 pages of pictures, featuring cats from lions to tiny kittens. Each cat is a marvel; and each is framed in a particular setting. There are lions trotting through the bush, sleek tigers posed with maharanis, cats of ancient Egypt clad in gold. The effect seems unreal, almost dreamlike.

"Good!" approves Vavra. "I'm creating an illusion. It's hard to find and frame an illusion; that's where the art comes in. There's been a little controversy about dressing the cats in jewelry, and whatever."

VAVRA'S words are slow and clipped and slightly defensive. "But I think that's ridiculous. A photographer should be able to use his creative imagination. I'm not doing a documentary on cats; I'm romantically expressing the way people feel about them."

Why cats? Is the photographer, who so thoroughly captured the feline, a cat person himself?

"I have a cat-like dog," Vavra laughs, a little embarrassed. "I didn't have any affinity for domestic cats, as cats. I'd been doing horse books, when James Michener suggested a change. 'You know, I didn't stay in the South Pacific, either.' And I remembered a conversation with Ernest Hemingway in Spain in 1959."

"But, I'm not a cat person. I think all subcultures are the same, except they have a different animal."

While he talks, a seductive Abyssinian cat is padding languorously around the room. She's here with Ron Henriques of the San Diego Zoo. Henriques helped handle the big predators in the book, and the little cat is along for the ride. Vavra scratches the lithe kitty, and it scampers away.

LITTLE KITTIES, yes, but the book contains some big ones. Was there any danger? "I've never felt in danger, except one time." However, Vavra refuses to tell which picture contains that predator.

"I didn't feel any menace from one particular tiger, then he was the one who tore into that crowd in California and mauled the high schoolers." He shakes his head. "They shouldn't have had the tiger there."

Working with cats is a matter of "patience, infinite patience. I used 700 to 1,000 images for each shot, after making the basic set-up. Then I wrote the text. Most photographers can't write and vice-versa." He waves his hand lightly.

The book is large, coffee-table size. Half is devoted to the almost baroque portraits, and half to text by Vavra. He weaves cat quotes, thoughts and stories together into a whole cloth. Some pictures are startling, others humorous. There is one photo of a white cat caressed by an unmistakable profile — Bo Derek.

"I met the Dereks in Spain, and he let me take the picture. He had never allowed anyone to photograph her before like that. She's not like some people say. She's a very bright, straightforward young woman. And yes, the cat is their cat."



Jan Ryneron-Dean decided that she would face the new year with an improvement plan that would take years off of her appearance.

By Rustle Shand
special writer

I BELIEVE that 1987 will have to be a better year than 1986.

Eighty-six seemed to be one of those years when everything went wrong. Too many people said they couldn't do a thing with their hair.

Skin that was all dried out was accompanied by new lines you would swear weren't there last year. And, to add insult to injury, makeup began to look and feel like the '60s.

Of course, that's just the tip of the iceberg among all the things most of us want to change in 1987. Some people want to stop smoking. Others want to lose weight; and, still others have vowed to start a healthful exercise program.

BUT OF ALL the things people want to change, hairstyles and

makeup are the easiest and the fastest transformations to accomplish. There is no waiting weeks or months for results. It only takes a couple of hours.

Jan Ryneron-Dean, who said she has had enough of the 1986 dated look, decided to usher in the New Year with a star quality makeover under the capable direction of hairstylist Vianis Karimalis.

With his quiet manner and artful styling techniques, Karimalis has captured the hearts and heads of such luminaries as Lana Turner, the late Princess Grace of Monaco, Princess Zsa Zsa Gabor, Roberta Peters, Sophia Loren and Melina Mercouri.

Local celebrities who regularly visit Vianis in his new location in Southfield's LaFemme Salon include the entire Max Fisher family. Also, Detroit's People Mover

Please turn to Page 2

New year gets fresh new face



Vianis Karimalis calls on some of the beauty tricks he has used on socialites and celebrities to bring a more youthful appearance to Ryneron-Dean. Karimalis says he is honest with his clients, but he doesn't press them into making drastic changes in their appearances.



It's the best money that she ever spent, the delighted Ryneron-Dean told the beaming experts who helped her create a new image and appearance.



Alla Nisnevich shows Ryneron-Dean makeup techniques that will give her skin a fresher appearance and her features a more youthful glow. The natural looking makeup pleased her client.

Staff photos by Stephen Cantrell

Dear Mr. Moss

A friendly fellow tries to answer his mail

By Chuck Moss
special writer

I'm a lucky guy, and that's no mistake. I've got friends all over the place. People are always writing letters to me, just to be friendly.

What people? Well, important people. People who work in financial institutions. Like this letter I got the other day from a Mr. Craig Hokums (all the names are changed to protect my friends' privacy). Craig works for the Prudential, in Pontiac.

"Dear Mr. Moss," the letter said, "we're announcing a whole new form of life insurance. . . ." and it listed all the good stuff it would do for me.

How thoughtful! Here I am, new in town, and this fellow cares enough about me to give good advice. Not only that, but he says "Welcome to your new home."

Well, if that isn't neighborly! So I called him up. His secretary asked my name, but put me through. He answered.

"Hi!" I said. "I'm your pal Chuck." He was confused at first, but then he listened. I went on: "It was so great of you to write. Say, I'm new in town and you could tell me a good place to get fresh fish? And what's the best barbecue sauce? I like Open Pit."

"Ah, Mr. . . . Moss? Does this pertain to insurance?" "No," I said happily. "Not business at all. I just wanted to thank you for writing such a lovely letter and to invite you over to my house for barbecue. What did you say was the best sauce?"

HE SAID he'd check, and I let him go. What a wonder-

ful country, where total strangers care about your welfare! I felt so good that I decided to collect all the nice letters I'd gotten in the mail and call all my new friends.

The first one was a vice president of a bank in Delaware. He wrote me to offer me some money. He said I could have the money and pay it back later. What a pal! So I called Delaware, and his secretary answered. "Mr. Yokum's office."

"I'm Jerry's pal Chuck," I introduced myself. The secretary wanted to know my business.

"I just called up to say 'hi,'" I replied. "I just called up to ask how things are going. To chat about the weather, ask about the wife, you know. Like friends always do."

"What is this reference to?" "Well, he sent me this letter," I explained. The secretary asked what kind of letter, then asked my name. Finally she said my pal Jerry was tied up in a very important meeting. I said, "OK, tell him I called," and hung up.

NEXT WAS a very important buddy of mine. He's the president of a big bank in South Dakota. Imagine that! His letter was signed "Cordilly" and said "R.S.V.P." Now I'm not interested in another credit card, but he's a prince of a guy to think of me.

"President Bunkum's office, will you please hold?" and they left me listening to march music for five minutes. Then another of those pesky secretaries started asking questions.

"What do you want?"

"To talk to my friend."

"Who are you?"

"Chuck Moss."

"Who do you work for?"

"Myself."

"Talk about what?"

"How much snow you get in Dakota, which snowblower is best, are there polar bears in South Dakota, that kind of stuff," I said.

"I'll also tell him he needs a new secretary who doesn't hassle his pals," I added.

The lady hung up.

I FELT pretty low that night. None of my other new friends had wanted to talk to me, either. They all had nosy secretaries who wouldn't put my calls through. I didn't understand. Why had they written me letters if they didn't want to be friends? Then the phone rang.

"Mr. Moss? Hi, I'm with E.P. Hutton in Southfield and I'd like to talk investment strategy."

Another new friend! And this one called me up! I smiled.

"Hey, how ya doing? What about them Lions, huh?"

"About investments. . . ."

I broke in, said I don't invest, but let's talk about Reagan. He said he could only talk about investments.

"Then why did you call me if you didn't want to be buddies?"

"Come on!" he said, "I'm selling financial services."

"No!" I was aghast. "You just wanted to sell me something!"

I couldn't believe it. These guys didn't want to be pals at all! They were just pretending, so they could sell me stuff. Geeze!