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# A CAT CALLED ROOM 8

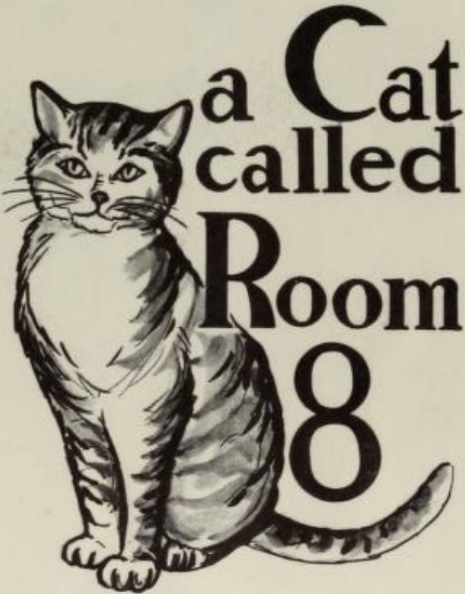
By VIRGINIA FINLEY & BEVERLY MASON  
Illustrated by VALERIE MARTIN

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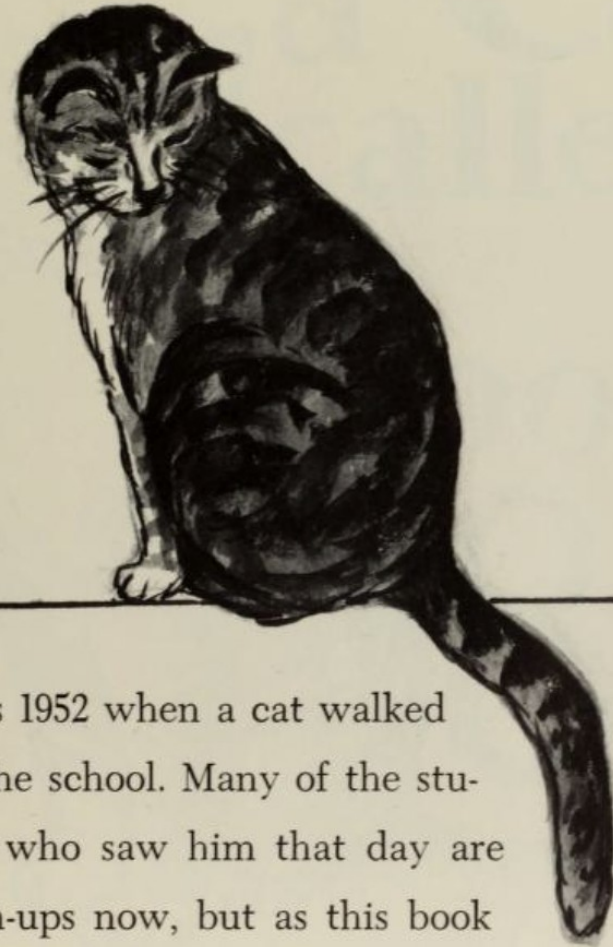
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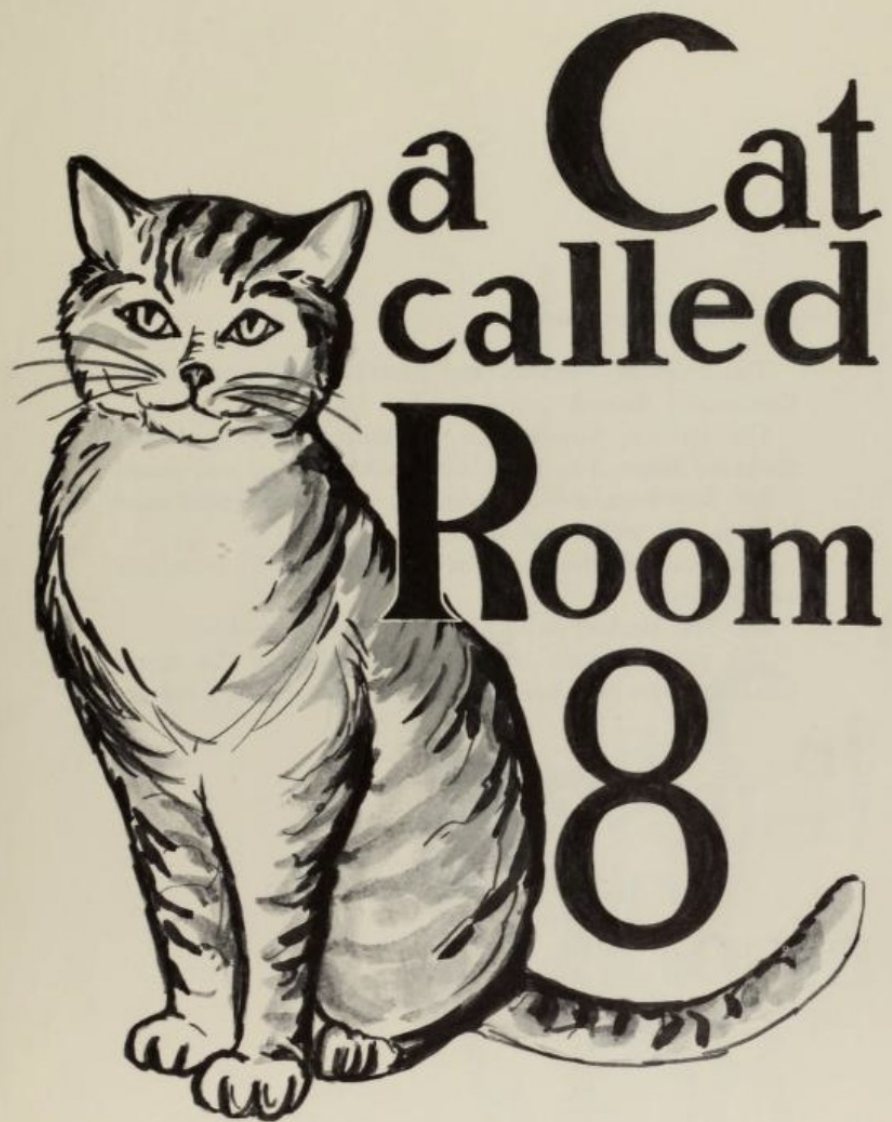


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It was 1952 when a cat walked into the school. Many of the students who saw him that day are grown-ups now, but as this book goes to press, Room 8 is still the toast and the mascot of Elysian Heights Elementary School. This is Room 8's story, and it is all true.



By Virginia Finley and Beverly Mason

Illustrated by Valerie Martin

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*Our book is dedicated to:*

The children, teachers, and parents of Elysian Heights Elementary School.

The Nakano, Mitsui, and Mazzucco families who have sheltered Room 8 in their homes when school was closed.

Mr. Sam Ross, school custodian, who has devoted much time to the welfare of Room 8.

The many children who have been Room 8's secretaries and feeders.

Dr. Ted Haskell, who has kept Room 8 healthy.

The many friends of Room 8 throughout the world, including Mrs. Pauline Galindo, former school secretary.

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In Miss White's sixth-grade room the children were singing "Down in the Valley." Susan laughed and pointed to the door. Everyone stopped singing and looked. There, sitting in the doorway, was a big, gray cat.

The cat walked around the room. He jumped up and walked on the desks. Hands reached out and petted him. Someone said, "This is the skinniest cat I've ever seen."

Miss White said, "Since it is recess time, let's give him some milk. Maybe he will leave then."



The class returned from recess and found the cat asleep on a desk. Jim put the ball in the cloakroom. He shouted, "The lunches are all over the floor."

Everyone ran to the cloakroom. They



saw torn sacks! There were pieces of bread, meat and cookies everywhere. "My ham sandwich is gone," said John. "I'll bet that cat ate it!"

Miss White said, "This cannot go on! What are we going to do with this cat?"

"He's sleeping now," said Susan. "Let's see what he does when he wakes up."





The cat followed the class to lunch. He looked so thin that the children gave him food from their lunches — potato chips, milk, ice cream, and tuna fish sandwiches. He ate, and he ate, and he ate! Then, he walked across the playground and out the gate.

The next morning as the children came to school the cat followed them into the room. He jumped up on a desk and began to wash his face.





Jack said, "Last night I saw him in garbage cans looking for food. A woman yelled 'Scat' and threw a rock at him."

Miss White said, "This cat probably does not have a home. Maybe one of you can find a home for him. But now he will have to go out. We cannot have a cat at school."





She picked him up, put him in the hall, and shut the door. Everyone was very unhappy.

Soon there was a loud crash and the cat was back in the room. He had jumped through the open window. He took another jump and landed in the sink. He meowed loudly. Jim walked over and turned on the faucet. The cat started to drink.

“See,” said Susan, “he thinks this is his home.”

The cat found a place on a desk and looked at Miss White. She said, “I give up. The cat can stay, but we must start work!”



The next day the cat came back. He moved from desk to desk and slept on the children's papers. At noon he ate lunch with them. He sat on a bench while they played games. After lunch he came back to the room and slept all afternoon.

Just before going home someone suggested that they give the cat a name. Jim said, "Why not call him Room 8, since that is the number of our room?"

Everyone agreed. Room 8 was now the room cat.

Every school day, rain or shine, Room 8 came to school. He walked up and down the hall. Boys and girls stopped to pet him and say "Hello." He spent most of his time in Room 8, but he seemed to feel he could go anywhere in the school. Soon he was the school cat!



After school, Room 8 left and walked up into the hills nearby. Everybody thought he lived in the hills at night and on weekends.



The sixth-graders chose Jim to be the “cat feeder.” Jim fed Room 8 every day at noon. When Room 8 was very hungry and could not wait until lunchtime, he marched over to Jim’s desk. He meowed loudly until Miss White said, “You’d better feed him or we won’t be able to work.” Soon the skinny cat became a fat cat!



One day a teacher brought a big, white duck to show to the second-graders. The duck sat in the middle of the floor and the teacher told the children about it.

Room 8 walked into the room and went over to the duck. The duck said, "Quack, quack," and flapped his big wings. The cat ran out of the room. The duck ran down the hall after the frightened cat. The teacher ran after both of them and the second-graders laughed and laughed.

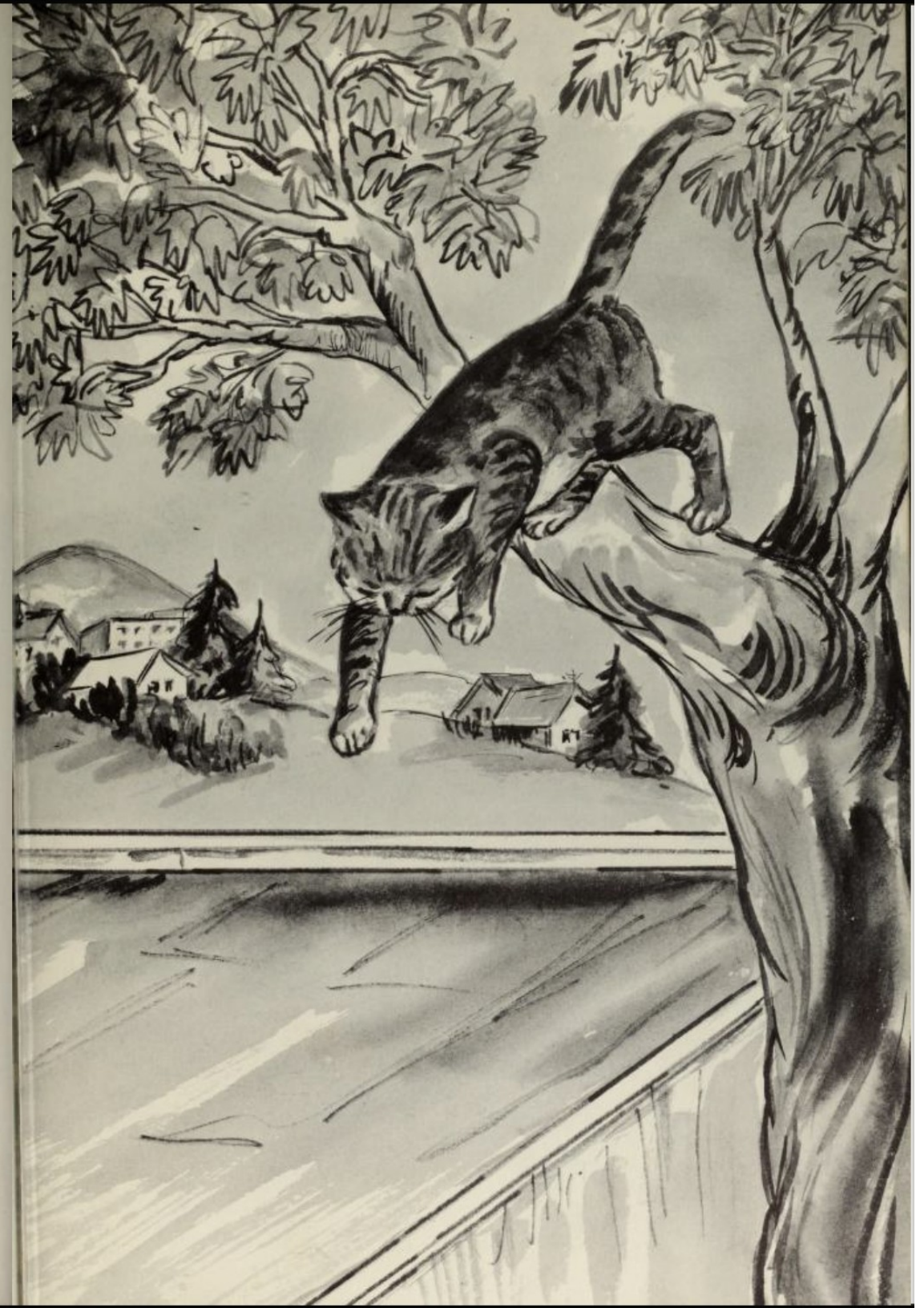
The teacher caught the duck just as Room 8 ran into his own room.



One day Room 8 climbed a tall tree and jumped to the roof of the school. He looked over the side of the roof and saw many things. Boys and girls were playing. Cars were going up and down the streets. People were walking here and there.

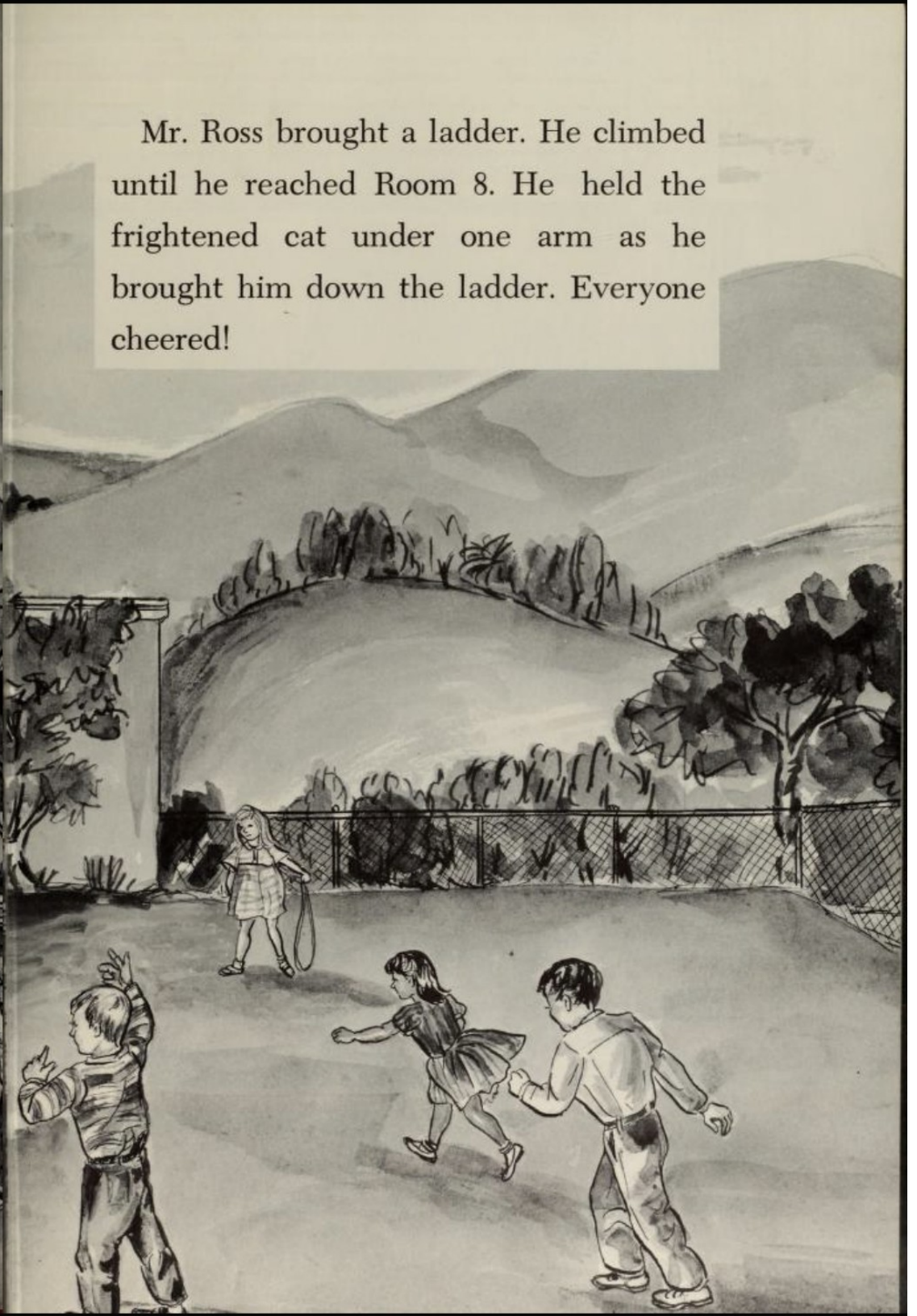
When it was time to go down, Room 8 could not reach the tree. He started to meow. Then he howled.

Jim saw Room 8 in trouble and ran to get help. He found Mr. Ross. "Room 8 needs help," he said. "He is stuck up on the roof."





Mr. Ross brought a ladder. He climbed until he reached Room 8. He held the frightened cat under one arm as he brought him down the ladder. Everyone cheered!





Another time, Room 8 walked into a fourth-grade room to take a nap. He did not hear the class leave.

The boys and girls in the next room heard a loud noise. They opened the door. Room 8 was jumping up and scratching on the window. He ran out the open door — his head high, his tail waving, his back arched.

Someone said, “He must have been really frightened when he woke up and found himself alone!”

A third-grade boy brought his pet to school. It was a trap-door spider. It was in a big jar so everyone could see it. Room 8 looked at this strange creature.

When it was time to go home, the boy went for his pet. The spider was gone!



Everyone looked for the spider, but it could not be found. The boy said, "I think Room 8 has eaten my spider."

Room 8 meowed and walked out of the room. He seemed to be saying, "How could anyone blame me for such a thing! Don't they know I never eat spiders?"





The kindergarten children planned a birthday party for Room 8. They decided to buy his favorite cat food and an extra-special catnip mouse. The class would have punch and cookies.

The big day arrived. As Room 8 came in, everyone sang, "Happy birthday, Room 8." They gave him his mouse and laughed as he played with it.





When the sixth-grade class worked in the school garden, Room 8 found many things to do. He watched bees darting in and out of flowers. He chased butterflies. Once a child said, "Room 8 is smelling the sweet peas! I never knew cats liked to smell flowers."

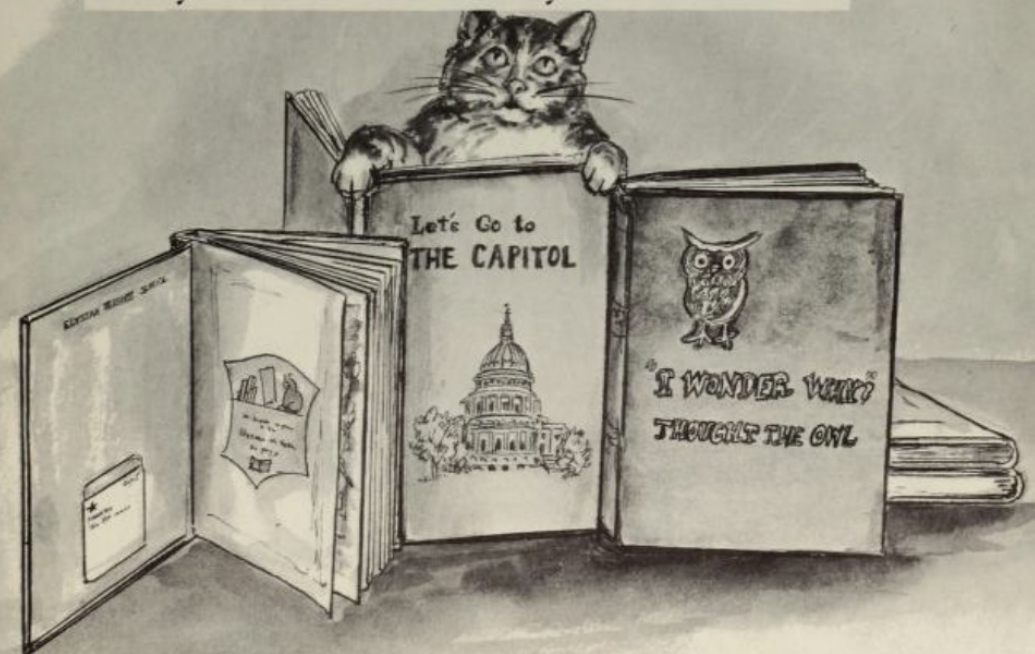
On warm days, Room 8 climbed on the greenhouse to sun himself or sat under a tree. The garden was a fun place!

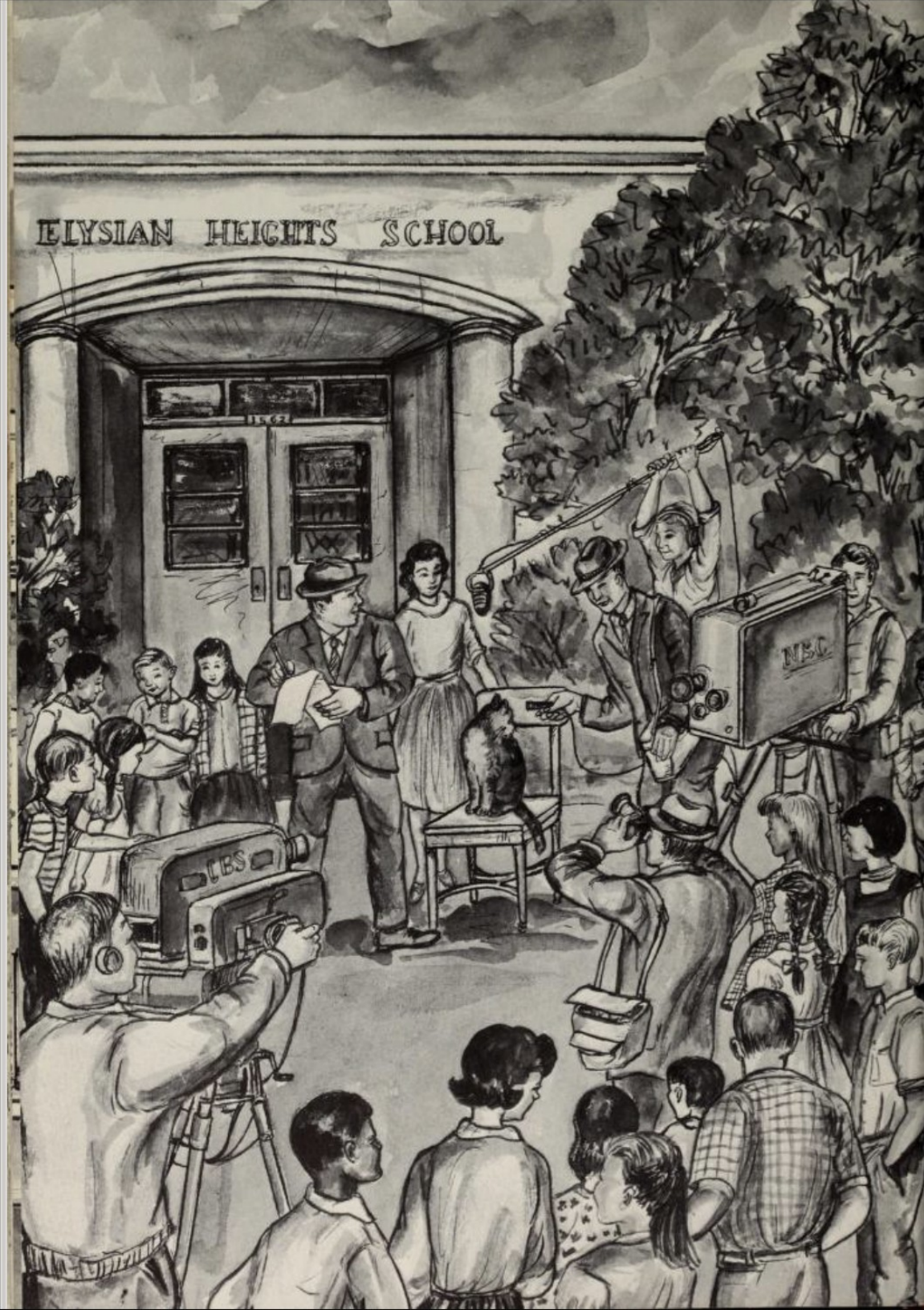




The school started a library. There were many beautiful books. Everyone felt Room 8 should be a part of this room. Melvin painted a picture of Room 8 sitting proudly by a stack of books with one gray paw raised. It look as if he were asking every child to read a book! This picture was hung on the library wall.

When the library needed a bookplate, Eddie made one. It showed Room 8 looking at books. There was one for every book in the library.





When school ended in June, Room 8 went away. How did he know it was vacation time and all the pupils would be gone? No one knew the answer! He came back when school opened in September.

Room 8 soon became famous. Four newspapers sent reporters and photographers to the school. The story of Room 8 was then printed in the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Parkside Journal*, and the *Hollywood Citizen News*.

Five television channels also told the story of Room 8.



Look magazine printed the story of a day at school with Room 8. Many people around the world read about the school cat.







Many other people have taken photographs of Room 8. If he kept a photo album, part of it might look like this.

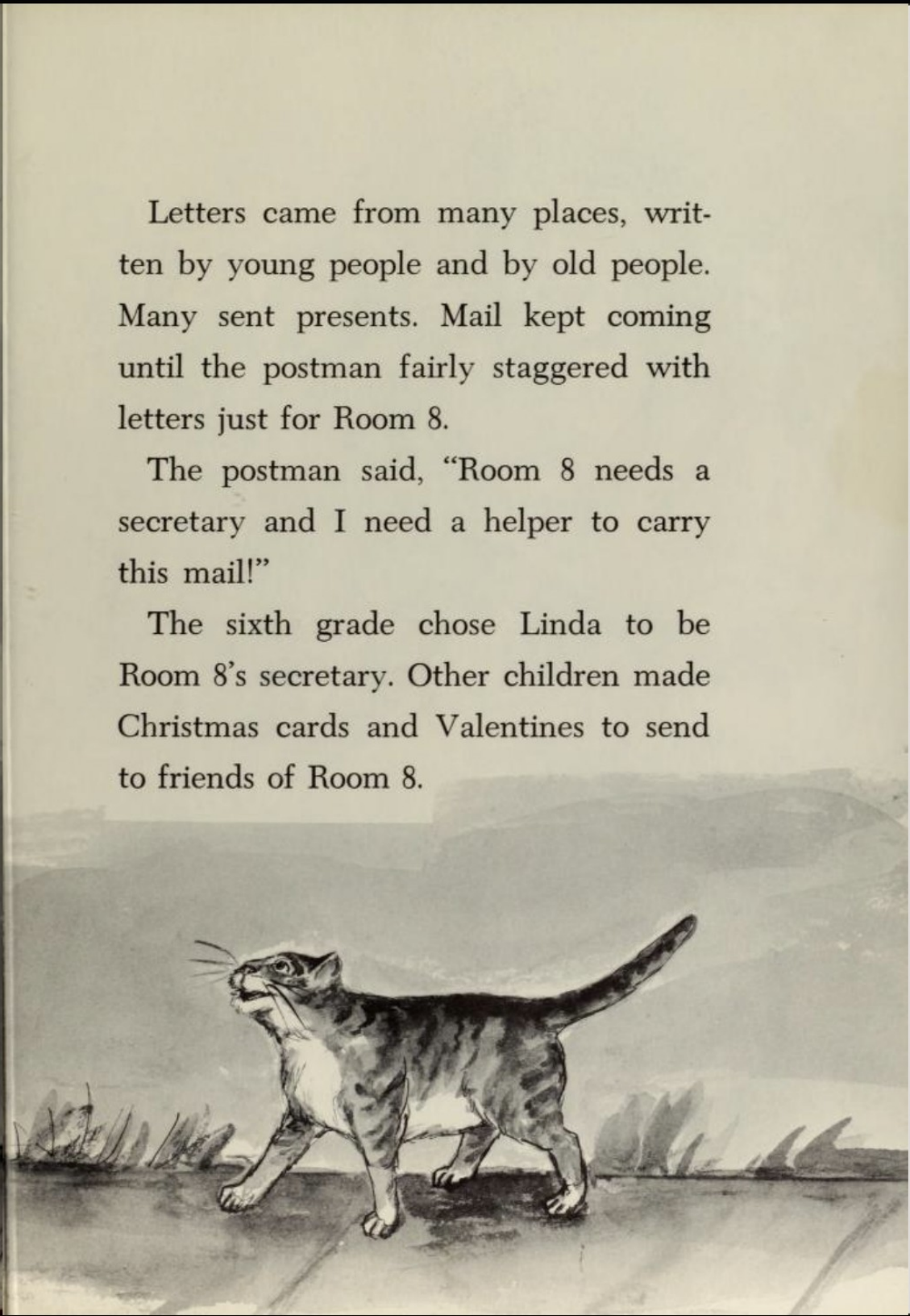




Letters came from many places, written by young people and by old people. Many sent presents. Mail kept coming until the postman fairly staggered with letters just for Room 8.

The postman said, "Room 8 needs a secretary and I need a helper to carry this mail!"

The sixth grade chose Linda to be Room 8's secretary. Other children made Christmas cards and Valentines to send to friends of Room 8.



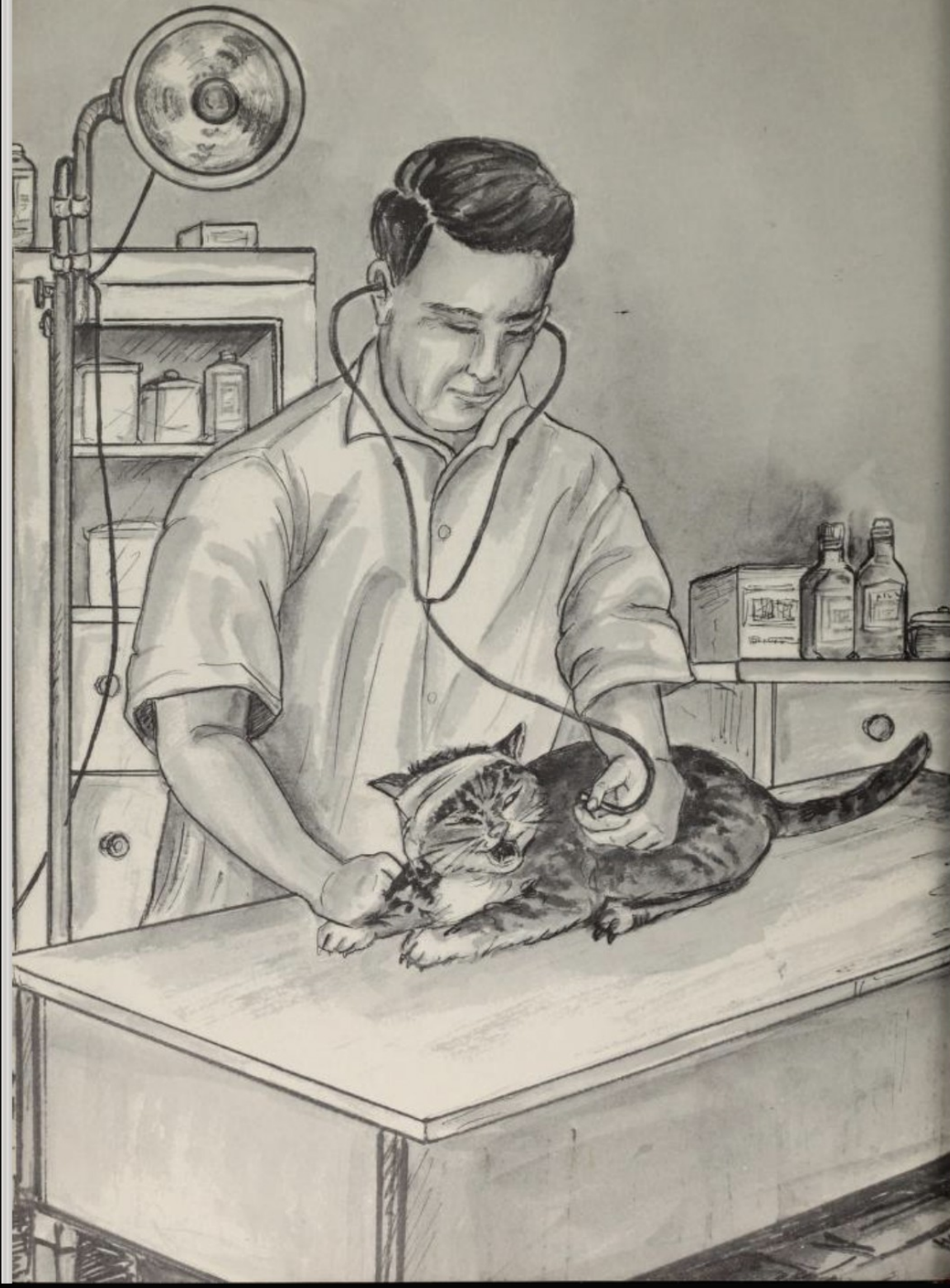


Every year a photographer took a picture of the sixth-grade graduating class. Room 8 was always included. He seemed to know this was a very important occasion. At least he spent extra time washing his face and making himself beautiful. When the photographer arrived he was ready to pose on the lap of the “cat feeder.”



Everyone loved Room 8 so much they wanted to have his paw imprinted in cement. The sidewalk was dug up and new cement poured. Everyone came to watch. There were television cameramen, newspaper reporters, photographers, parents, children and teachers.

Mr. Ross gently dropped Room 8 on the wet cement. Everyone cheered! Television cameras rolled as he walked across the cement with tail and head high.



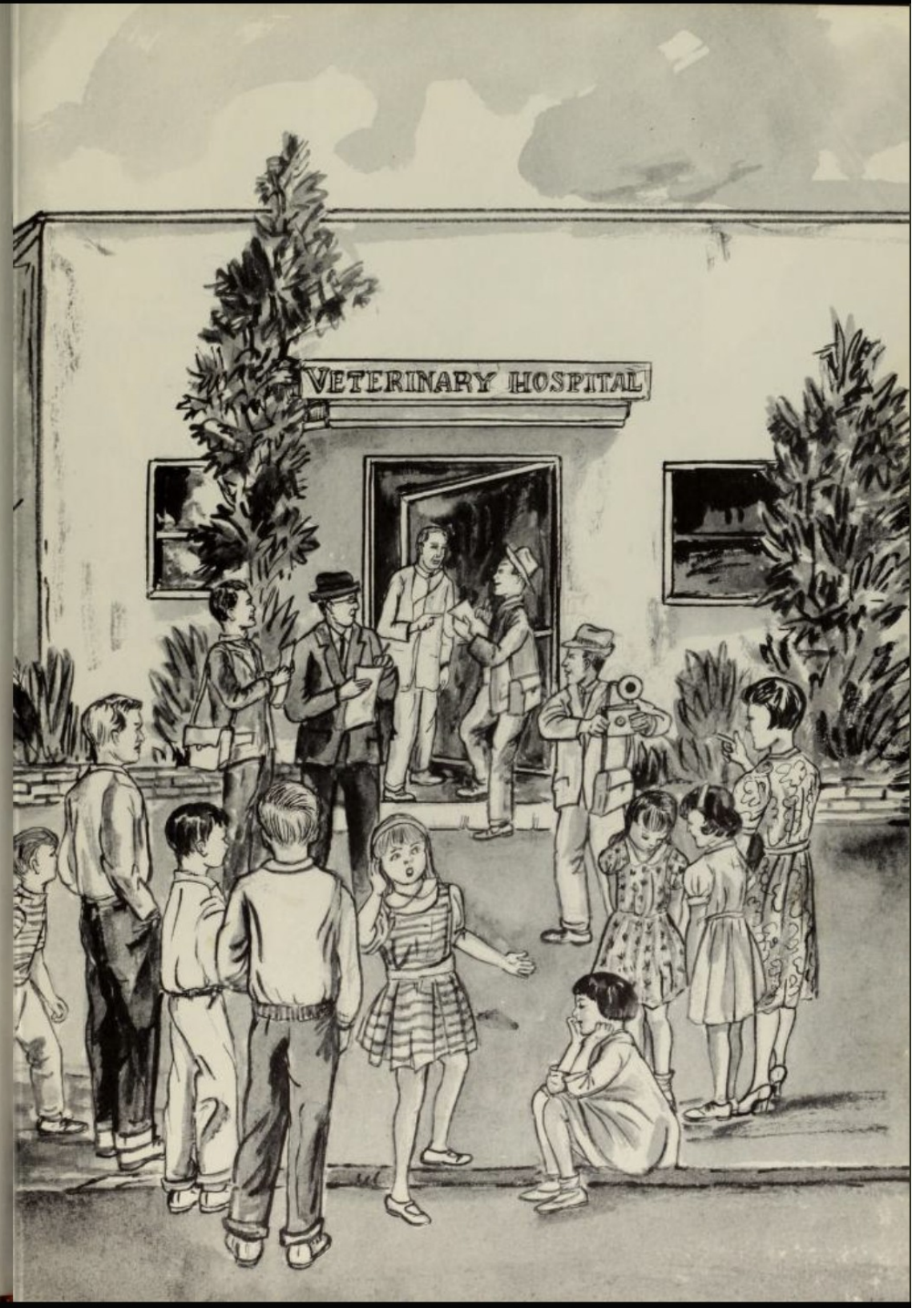
Room 8 grew older. When he was sick, he became the most famous patient at Dr. Lockhart's Animal Hospital.

He had trouble eating and was rushed to the hospital. The doctor found he had a bad tooth and gave him some medicine to make him sleep. When he woke up, his tooth was gone.

He made a second trip to the hospital when a mean cat bit a hole in his ear. The doctor had to sew it, so it would stand up like a cat's ear.

His next visit to the doctor was for a very bad cold. Doctors worked night and day for five days to save his life. Reporters and photographers rushed to the hospital. The newspapers told the story of his illness and the news was on the radio, too. People telephoned to ask about him. He received many get-well cards.

He recovered and returned to school. Everyone was happy!





Twelve years have gone by since Room 8 first arrived at school. Now he is known to everyone in the neighborhood. Every home has an open door for him. One man plays his guitar and sings songs to Room 8.

Everyone walking down the street has a kind word and soft pat for this cat. People stop and watch to see that he crosses the street safely.

He does not have to hunt for food. People feed him many things — Spanish rice, sukiyaki and beefsteak.

Through the years, Room 8 has stayed in many homes. He likes it best where there are young boys and girls. Now that he is older he spends his nights with Brenda or Larry. His friends at school know Room 8 is safe and warm at all times. This makes them happy because they love Room 8 very much.

Room 8 has become the gentle school cat who loves people — especially children.



#### *The Authors*

BEVERLY MASON is Principal at Elysian Heights School where Room 8 lives. She received her schooling in California and Wisconsin and has traveled all over the world and across America. She has been associated with the Los Angeles City Schools since 1949, and has written geography and history materials for children in these schools.

VIRGINIA FINLEY was teaching at Elysian Heights when Room 8 arrived. She is currently a teacher in a Los Angeles City Elementary School, where as a training teacher she is helping to prepare students from California State College at Los Angeles to enter the elementary teaching profession.

#### *The Artist*

VALERIE MARTIN received her art training at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Otis Art Institute. Mrs. Martin has taught at various colleges and is an art consultant of the Los Angeles School Board, and came to know Room 8 quite well.





More on the real world of animals

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# Adventures with Elsie The Famous Cow

by LEE DAVID HAMILTON

*illustrated with photographs*



Elsie was "created" at the time of the 1939 New York World's Fair. This is the unique story of how she became a popular civic symbol selling war bonds, officiating at public ceremonies, being inducted into an Indian tribe, and appearing at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair.

