

Cat-person and author speaks Series: Metro REPORT

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Cleveland Amory insists he is owned by his cat.

The best-selling author of *The Cat Who Came for Christmas*, which spent 22 weeks on the New York Times best-seller list, and its sequel, *The Cat and the Curmudgeon*, spoke to a group of fans and animal lovers at the Clearwater Public Library East on Friday night.

Amory left no doubt that he, not Polar Bear, his green-eyed feline companion, is the 'curmudgeon' in the title of his newest book.

The Humane Society of North Pinellas brought several stray cats to the book signing hoping to find them homes, said director Rick Chaboudy. Clearwater Mayor Rita Garvey presented Amory, an animal rights activist, with a key to the city.

Amory, a Harvard University graduate who said he started his career as the youngest editor ever of the *Saturday Evening Post*, signed copies of his book and answered questions from fans.

He spoke about how he became involved in animal rights causes after he pelted a Mexican bullfighter with a wet stadium cushion. The matador, who was parading around the ring holding up the dead bull's ears, infuriated Amory.

'I just wanted one good shot at the guy,' Amory said.

Amory helped start the Fund for Animals in 1967.

The fund has been involved in such causes as anti-whaling actions and the recent push for legislation to protect the mountain lions of California. He has also worked to stop the sale of fur coats.

'They're very interested in my hair, these furriers,' Amory said as he tried to smooth the curly gray mass away from his forehead. 'As we deny them more and more pelts, they become more and more interested in my hair.' Drug sweep leads to 141 arrests Sheriff's officials in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco and Sumter counties made at least 141 arrests during the seventh Rockpile drug crackdown this week, Hillsborough Sheriff's Lt. James Tagliarini said.

Final statistics have not been tallied for the operation, which began Monday and ended at midnight Friday, he said. In the operation, 129 grams of cocaine, 228 grams of crack cocaine, 23 doses of LSD and 28 pounds of marijuana were confiscated, he said.

Levy, Marion, Polk, Citrus and Hernando counties have not yet reported arrest totals, he said.

Sheriff's officials concentrated on issuing search warrants during this operation, Tagliarini said, but 'we're not overlooking street sales.'

The first Operation Rockpile began in July 1989 and was geared primarily toward crack cocaine. More than 11,000 people have been arrested so far, Tagliarini said. **Drug treatment center loses case A jury awarded Karen Norton \$721,000 in damages Thursday for ill treatment she suffered at Straight Inc., a drug rehabilitation program in St. Petersburg.**

As a result of an 18-month stay at Straight Inc. when she was 17, Norton said, she still has nightmares, is fearful of counselors and has trouble dealing with her anger. Norton said she was battered and kept at the facility against her will.

'In theory and on paper, this place looks great,' said Karen Barnett, Norton's attorney. 'The problem is they don't follow their own policies or procedures.'

In her lawsuit filed in 1985, Norton, alleged the former director, Virgil Miller Newton, grabbed her and threw her against a wall, screamed that she no longer had 'any rights' and told her she would not be allowed to leave the facility.

Norton, now 25 and living in Jacksonville, said she was denied health care and once collapsed and had to be rushed to a hospital for an emergency appendectomy.

In her most dramatic testimony during the nine-day trial, she told jurors how she was not allowed to visit her dying grandfather in Jacksonville. When he died, Norton said she was not told about it until after the funeral two weeks later.

Norton eventually fled the facility. Joy Margolis, a spokeswoman for Straight Inc., denied Norton's charges and said Straight has changed since Norton was put in the program by her parents eight years ago.

Margolis said Straight would appeal the jury's decision.

[Illustration]

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO, Jim Damaske; BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO, Times files; BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO, (4); BLACK AND WHITE MAP; Buddhism: Buddhist Temple of Florida: 90;; Caption: Author Cleveland Amory gives a homeless cat a kiss on the ear. With him is Rick Chaboudy, director of the North Pinellas Humane Society; Sheriff Everett Rice (ran S, T); Dorsey Sanders III (ran C, T); Sheriff John M. Short (ran C, T); Sen. Helen Gordon Davis (ran C, S); Terry Cox helps her husband, Andy (ran S); Map locating the Loy Krathong Festival of Lights in Tampa (ran S)

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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