

FROM STONE ORCHARD: *A Collection of Memories*, Timothy Findley; \$26 cloth 0-00-255729-0, 160 pp., 5½ x 8½, HarperFlamingo Canada, Sept. *Reviewed from unbound galleys*

Timothy Findley, whose many accomplishments include the Governor General's Award for Fiction, is one of Canada's most fertile wordsmiths. His bestsellers include, *The Piano Man's Daughter*, *Dust to Dust* and *Headhunter*.

From Stone Orchard, a collection of Findley's *Harrowsmith* columns, along with new material, takes us into the private world of the author and his partner, William Whitehead, on their farm in Cannington, Southern Ontario.



Timothy Findley

Here we meet Findley on intimate terms, and discover how his characters are conceived, how his stories evolve. "It was in a corner of this field that I once sat and watched a calf being born...in *The Piano Man's Daughter*, the title character, Lily, was also born in that corner."

The *Stone Orchard* memories span three decades of life in the country, with its novel, if somewhat turbulent experiences, which are tempered with the kindness of down-the-road farmers, such as Leonard Griffin, who introduced Findley and Whitehead to "the use of neighbour as a verb." Findley and Whitehead were hopeless neophytes when they moved into their falling-down farmhouse. But they were dedicated to what the rural life stood for. "But for that ignorance, we would not have any of the joys of country living – including the laughter that is our daily companion."

Farming mishaps abound, including dead rats in the drinking water cistern and an explosion of cats, which peaked at 36. The cat surge at Cannington is attributed to Volkswagen "drops on dark and stormy nights."

History, nature, and friends enrich the lives of Findley and Whitehead. The visit of Margaret Laurence to Cannington is particularly memorable. So is the discovery of an original Susanna Moodie poem under a framed print bought at an auction.

Stone Orchard sets a different pace for Findley, one that is more relaxed and light-hearted. From it, we garner a deeper appreciation of him not only as a writer, but as a lover of animals, nature, and the process of life itself. — by Cece Scott, a Toronto writer.