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***Uncommon Friends: Life with Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, Alexis Carrel and Charles Lindbergh* by James Newton**

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career orientation, and upward mobility. . .that produced enduring internal sources of ethnic variation” (p. 319).

This overall generalization is very persuasive, but some of the specific conclusions drawn from the comparative perspective are problematic. While the political and socioeconomic trajectory of Italians is thoroughly documented, the research on Cubans and Spaniards is more limited, and thus some conclusions are necessarily tenuous. One example appears in the chapter on economic adjustments. The authors conclude that Italians outstripped Cubans and Spaniards economically because their strategies were more conducive to that end. “The evidence does not suggest that Cubans and Spaniards worked less hard. . .but rather that their economic goals drew upon different values, producing contrasting results” (p. 267). The problem is that while Italian adjustment strategies are analyzed in considerable detail, the condition, values and aspirations of Cubans and Spaniards are insufficiently developed to explain their economic experience. Thus, the argument, for example, that “Cuban American life-styles mitigated against the accumulation of savings or property,” is not entirely convincing (p. 268).

Despite this imbalance in the research, the study’s conceptualization and organization are solid, and it is an excellent case study of an immigrant community’s formation and evolution. Furthermore, it raises issues and questions regarding immigrant group adaptation and interaction that should spark additional research by immigration and ethnic historians in general and students of the Latin community of Ybor City in particular.

Gerald E. Poyo

Uncommon Friends: Life with Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, Alexis Carrel and Charles Lindbergh. By James Newton. San Diego. 1987. Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Publishers. Pp. 368. Illustrations. Index. Cloth. \$19.95.

Fort Myers in the twenties was a small town, its population being just under 4,000. It had no industry to speak of. Its main sources of revenue were agriculture and tourism. Yet this insignificant dot on the map was the winter home of the inventor, Thomas Alva Edison, and the automobile manufacturer, Henry Ford. Tiremaker and corporate wizard, Harvey Firestone, was a frequent winter visitor. These three men, plus scientist Alexis Carrel and flier extraordinaire Charles A. Lindbergh, were the “uncommon friends” of James Newton.

The young Newton came to Fort Myers in the early 1920s to go into real estate. He acquired some raw land across McGregor Blvd. from Edison’s home and began to develop it. That proximity brought on contacts between the Edisons and Newton. These contacts grew into a deep and abiding friendship.

That friendship broadened to include Ford, Firestone, Carrel and Lindbergh, and those friendships are what *Uncommon Friends* is all about. Newton does not dwell on the well-known accomplishments of these men, but rather takes his readers behind the scenes. We see them in their shirt sleeves and hear them discussing their philosophies, their business policies and their ideas for a better world. We also read about their strength which was the result of their faith in a



Signed by Henry Ford, Thomas A. Edison and Harvey Firestone (left to right), this photograph was inscribed "To Jimmie Newton."

Supreme Power, not necessarily following the teachings of an organized religion. We find this, strength and faith influencing their business decisions. Theirs was not just a Sunday religion.

Another fascinating facet of this book is the view of national and international politics and problems as seen by these uncommon friends. They not only saw the problems, but they also put their expertise to work to find solutions. Sometimes they were misunderstood or their motives were they questioned, but never did they compromise their consciences.

Entwined in the lives of these famous men was James Newton. He downplays his role, but the thread of his strong philosophy, upon which his life was anchored, runs through the book as a steady undercurrent. When he had to make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions, he stood firmly on the side of his principles and let the chips fall where they would.

His steadfastness was a major contribution to these friendships. They could ask him questions and know they would not receive yes-man answers. Also, from time to time he was able to ask the key questions that could help them unscramble knotty problems. Newton was a friend with whom they could relax and be themselves. That was no small gift for men who were frequently in the glare of the publicity spotlight. He was there to give moral support when stress and burdens became too heavy to bear. Equally important, he was there on some memorable fun-filled vacations.

He was indeed an uncommon friend of these five men on whom the spotlight fell, just as they were his uncommon friends. Friendship, after all, is a two-way street. In this case it resulted in a book well worth reading.

Albert Rawchuck

The Singing River: A History of the People, Places and Events Along the Manatee River. By Joe Warner. n.p. 1986. Pp. 181. Illustrations. Maps. Bibliography. Index. Paper. \$14.00. (Available from author: 980 Upper Manatee River Road, Bradenton, Florida 34202.)

In 1982, Joe and Libby Warner set out to write a history of the Manatee River and the towns and the cities around it. Five years later, the Warners realized their goal and published *The Singing River*. This book not only fulfills the Warners' original intent, but goes one step further. Using original newspapers, letters, maps and diaries, as well as over one hundred interviews of Manatee County's earliest settlers and their descendants, they have painted a picture of the people who settled along the river's banks and their lifestyle, mannerisms and folklore.

Through *The Singing River*, the Warners take readers on a trip not only up the Manatee River, but through time. They detail the history of twenty-nine settlements, many of which no longer exist except in the memories of Manatee County's earliest settlers and a few of their descendants. Beginning at the river's mouth in western Manatee County, Florida, the authors recapture life in such communities as Snead Island, Manatee, Rye and Bethany. Following their guide, the reader travels a total of fifty-five miles inland to the community of Four Corners at the intersection of Manatee, Hillsborough, Hardee and Polk counties.