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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

For Tampa’s Latins the path to fame - and occasionally a measure of fortune - has often been through sports. The sons and grandsons of Cuban, Spanish, and Italian immigrants have won a name for themselves in sports, especially baseball as evidenced by Al Lopez, Lou Piniella, and Tony LaRussa. One reason Latins-and others-have pursued this particular road is that Americans place greater value on sports than the arts, and when the latter bring success, it often goes unnoticed. Who in Tampa knows, for example, that Adel Sanchez, the son of a Tampa cigarmaker, is the principal trumpet player for Washington’s National Symphony?

Jose Yglesias, another native son of Tampa cigarworkers, achieved national - and even international - recognition as a writer, yet he is little known in his hometown. His death last November, at the age of seventy-five, provides an occasion to review his life and work, which includes eight novels, four books of nonfiction, four plays, and countless short stories, essays, articles, and reviews. Yglesias's significance for the Tampa area transcends the mere accident of his being born in West Tampa and growing up in Ybor City. More importantly, he drew his inspiration from this background and incorporated it into most of his writing. As he once said, he "tried to make American readers aware of Ybor City and its Latin cigarmakers."

This issue of Tampa Bay History is dedicated to Jose Yglesias and his legacy. The bulk of the pieces reproduced here were written by Yglesias himself over a fifty-year period, and they provide an introduction to his work, revealing the role of family and community, as well as history and memory, in both his fiction and nonfiction. The one short story included is "Un Buen Obrero" and it deserves reprinting in a publication devoted to local history because it captures the essence of Latin experiences in Tampa. All the other articles are nonfiction.

The issue also features five pieces about Yglesias. The opening article by Robert P. Ingalls and the concluding one by José Marcelo Garza examine the nature and significance of Yglesias's contribution. In addition, an article by Alberto Avendaño, translated from the Galician language, gives a Spanish view of this Latin writer of Galician descent. Finally, the issue closes with two eulogies - one delivered at his burial in Tampa and the other (a poem) written by one of Cuba's leading novelists, Pablo Armando Fernández.

The editors wish to acknowledge their debt to Dalia Corro, Jose Yglesias's sister, who generously provided most of the photographs used as illustrations. Only those photographs from other sources have individual credits.

We hope readers enjoy this unusual issue, which memorializes the most important writer yet produced by Tampa.