

Norman Gimbel, Grammy and Oscar-Winning Lyricist, Dies at 91

By Anita Gates

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Norman Gimbel, the wildly versatile Brooklyn-born lyricist who won a Grammy Award for a blues hit, “Killing Me Softly With His Song”; an Oscar for a folk ballad, “It Goes Like It Goes” (from “Norma Rae”); and television immortality for the bouncy series themes to “Happy Days” and “Laverne and Shirley,” died on Dec. 19 at his home in Montecito, Calif. He was 91.

The death was confirmed by his son Tony, managing partner of his father’s music publishing company, Words West.

Any attempt to categorize the elder Mr. Gimbel’s musical leanings would be complicated. He was famous for the English lyrics of “The Girl From Ipanema,” Antonio Carlos Jobim’s 1964 bossa nova hit originally written in Portuguese. He also wrote English lyrics for Michel Legrand’s music from Jacques Demy’s romantic 1964 French film “The Umbrellas of Cherbourg,” most notably “I Will Wait for You” (“Till you’re here beside me, till I’m touching you”) and for what became “I Will Follow Him,” a solid hit about teenage adoration sung by Little Peggy March (age 15) in 1963.

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