

LEO ROBIN MUSIC

November 10, 2020

Janet W. Lee
Variety
11175 Santa Monica Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Dear Ms. Janet Lee,

Leo Robin Music's Second Open Letter to Janet W. Lee at Variety: Demystify This! What Happened to the Star Awarded to the "Thanks For The Memory" Lyricist More Than 30 Years Ago but never installed? *(Released Tuesday, November 10, 2020 6:35 AM PST)*

I, Leo Robin's grandson, sent you an open letter on September 15, 2020 via FedEx, almost three months ago, but assume that you never received it since I haven't heard back from you. I am enclosing it once more so you will better understand why I was intrigued by your recent article in Variety, the premier source of entertainment news, issued on Tuesday, September 3, 2020 titled "Demystifying Hollywood's Walk of Fame: 'You Cannot Just Buy a Star.'" Again, I ask you to lend your special unearthing powers and skills to demystify what happened to the star awarded to lyricist Leo Robin on the Hollywood Walk of Fame more than 30 years ago but never installed.

I found your article extremely insightful in view of the controversy between Leo Robin Music and the Hollywood Chamber especially what the Producer of the Walk Of Fame, Ana Martinez, told Variety, "You cannot just buy a star. People don't understand that there's a process. They feel like if they have money, it can be bought, and that's not the way it works."

One would like to believe that the "process" that Ms. Martinez raves about reflects ideals where the Hollywood Chamber conducts its affairs as a professionally run organization and the Hollywood Walk Of Fame Committee is a deliberative body that makes decisions in a highly ethical ecosystem. Apparently, the Hollywood Chamber conducts its affairs in a different way based on the unprecedented situation with regard to the star awarded to Leo Robin more than 30 years ago but never installed because of a mistake made by them. It is mysterious that the star awarded to Leo Robin more than 30 years ago went through the "process" but was still never installed. This mystery reminds me of the title of my grandfather's song "Whispers in the Dark."

Ashley Lee from the Los Angeles Times first broke on May 23, 2019 this intriguing story, *Leo Robin never got his Walk of Fame star. Now his grandson is fighting for it*, about my serendipitous discovery on July 6, 2017 of Leo's long-lost star which I believe got lost because "[The Hollywood Chamber of Commerce]...made this 30-year-old mistake," Ms. Ashley Lee quoting me.

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In 1988, both Leo Robin's wife, Cherie Robin, and actor, Bob Hope, sponsored Leo for a posthumous star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. They wanted to see to it that Leo would be acknowledged for the legacy that Roy Trakin, who is the *crème de la crème* of entertainment journalism, reported on September 30, 2019, in his crisp and inimitable style, in *his* Variety article, "Thanks for the Memory: How Leo Robin Helped Usher In the Golden Age of Song in Film." They followed the instructions and mailed in the application approximately five years after Robin's passing so that he would be eligible to be nominated for a star as soon as possible. But all too soon after that, Cherie, herself, already grief-stricken, was diagnosed with a terminal illness.

Tragically, Cherie Robin never received the good news about Leo Robin's star because she passed away on May 28, 1989, a little over one year before the letter from the Hollywood Chamber was sent out on June 18, 1990 announcing that her husband had been awarded the star. As a result of these ill-fated circumstances, Leo's star was never installed. "I do think it was meant to be," Ms. Ashley Lee reported what I said of discovering the star. "It's important to me because it was important to my grandmother to pay tribute to Leo's career in this way. And she took the time, she followed all the rules. My grandmother did everything right except live long enough."

Ms. Janet Lee, I ask you again to demystify this! Demystify what happened to the star awarded to Robin more than 30 years ago. Here's what we learned about what the Hollywood Chamber did in the wake of the release of this story last year by The Times. Ms. Ashley Lee reported, "The envelope was returned to its sender and has since remained in the Chamber of Commerce's records." She also tweeted, "at first I didn't believe that Leo Robin's star had really slipped through the cracks" with a photo of that acceptance letter and the envelope stamped "RETURN TO SENDER." Ms. Ashley Lee explained the Chamber's view, "A mistake it was not, noted (Ana) Martinez to The Times. Back in 1989, before the ease of email and cell phones, honorees were not as repeatedly and actively pursued to secure their star as they are today. That means no follow-up letters and no calls to co-signers, even if Robin's application was co-signed by (Bob) Hope, who has four stars on the Walk."

The 1937 film *Artists and Models* received an Oscar nomination for Best Song, *Whispers in the Dark*, composed by Frederick Hollander with lyrics by Leo Robin, sung by Connee Boswell with *Andre Kostelanetz and His Orchestra*. The song's title captures the mystery of the star awarded to lyricist Leo Robin more than 30 years ago but never installed. The film was a musical comedy, starring Jack Benny, who adopted Leo Robin's "Love in Bloom" as his theme song and was known for playing it off-key on his violin, and it was produced by Lewis E. Gensler, who composed the song jazz standard "Love Is Just around the Corner," which Robin wrote the lyrics. The original Benny Goodman Trio with Gene Krupa on the drums and Teddy Wilson on the piano, which would become Benny Goodman's famous orchestra, broadcast on October 13 1937 "Whispers in the Dark" from the historic Madhattan Room inside the Hotel Pennsylvania, NYC. It was recorded by many of the orchestras and bands in its heyday

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including Josephine Bradley and Her Ballroom Orchestra, Paul Weston & His Orchestra, actress Alice Faye with Hal Kemp & His Orchestra, Bob Crosby & his Orchestra with vocal by Kay Weber and actors Bing Crosby and Kenny Baker.

Demystify this again! Demystify why the Hollywood Chamber failed to notify the co-sponsor, Bob Hope, after the letter was returned to sender. It has always been true when a letter has been "Return to Sender," the sender will verify the address and resend it. In 1990, the Hollywood Chamber obstructed installation of the star when it placed the acceptance letter that was returned to sender in its files and made no attempt to resend it. The Hollywood Chamber made no attempt to notify the sponsor, Bob Hope, who was one of the most famous entertainers in the world at the time. The Hollywood Chamber must have had Bob Hope's number from their own dealings with him. What the Chamber did after the letter was "Return to Sender" was not customary practice but smacks of disregard for the individuals honored by the Walk of Fame Committee.

There are typically only 24 stars awarded each year. It shouldn't have been that hard. Everyone else that year was given proper notice, had ceremonies and received stars. Someone somewhere should have done something. Anyone taking the time to apply as a sponsor for a candidate to receive a star has to believe that the Hollywood Chamber would be able to process the chosen few applications correctly. And, even more so, that any candidate approved for a star, would get a star.

Ms. Janet Lee, first time request, demystify this! Demystify why the star awarded to Leo Robin should cost ten times more for his star than anyone else's from the 1990-1991 class. There is a big disagreement over the price of the star. I believe it should be the original price of \$4,000, the fee back in 1990 when Robin was awarded the star. Meanwhile, the Hollywood Chamber believes it should be the current price ranging between \$40,000 and \$50,000 depending on which year they determine the cost.

I am not arguing with what the Hollywood Chamber sets the price of the star each year. In fact, the Hollywood Chamber is free to determine the cost of a star and it appears to be in equilibrium based on the supply and demand. What I am critical of is the process that Ms. Martinez talks about which I believe treated the honoree Leo Robin unjustly because of their mistake resulting in the failure to install the star. And so there would be no justification to charge the star awarded to Leo Robin at the rate today rather the year it was awarded. The Leo Robin legacy and his family have already paid an enormous price by the Hollywood Chamber's failure to install the star and the missing of the star from the Hollywood Walk of Fame over the past 30 years.

Even though my experience with the Hollywood Chamber has been disturbing, I feel that it is my mission to see that my grandfather gets his star. I am willing to honor the original commitment made back in 1988 by my grandmother, Cherie Robin, and Bob Hope. But, it would be unfair for his sponsors to have to pay ten times more for his star than anyone else's from the 1990-1991 class, even Woody Woodpecker's.

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Finally, Ms. Janet Lee, demystify this! Demystify why throughout the past sixty years, the Hollywood Chamber has successfully kept track of 2,691 honorees and has seen to it that each and every one of them received a star, which was then successfully installed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame - except for Leo Robin. Right now, in contradiction to its mission, the Hollywood Chamber is not doing justice to the award to Robin. Instead we are witness to the moral injustice of Leo's long-lost star and the Hollywood Chamber's refusal to honor their commitment to Robin's memory. One would think that today's Hollywood Walk of Fame would honor the decisions made by those who served before them. At this point, one can't help but conclude that Robin, his sponsors, his family and the 1990 Walk of Fame Committee, itself, have been treated unjustly by the Hollywood Chamber.

Bob Hope, who has four stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and sponsored Leo Robin for a star, and Johnny Grant, who has two stars himself and was Chairman of the 1990 Walk of Fame Committee and signed the acceptance letter addressed to Mrs. Robin, must be looking down mystified by the conduct of the Hollywood Chamber who has spurned the decision by the 1990 Walk of Fame Committee to award a star to Leo Robin. Johnny Grant was proud of his mission in life of bringing the Hollywood story to everyone and in 1987, the town's centennial year, he told Times columnist Jack Smith about Hollywood, "It's a magic word all over the world." Now is the time for the Hollywood Chamber to preserve the Hollywood magic and put Leo's long-lost star in its rightful place on the Hollywood Walk of Fame!

I would welcome you and your colleagues demystifying what happened to the star awarded to Leo Robin more than 30 years ago but never installed and the events that have taken place ever since. If I can assist you in any way in solving this mystery, you can reach me by phone at (818) 618-2572 or email at sdo007@aol.com.

In Leo Robin's lyrics from *Gulliver's Travels* -1939,

"Faithful Forever," Leo Robin Music