

8/29/10

Wrote 'What a Wonderful World'

OLDWICK, N.J. — George David Weiss, who helped write chart-topping pop hits including "Can't Help Falling in Love" and "What a Wonderful World," has died. He was 89.

He died Monday of natural causes at his home in Oldwick, N.J., said his wife, Claire.

Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley and many other big-name artists recorded compositions written or co-written by Mr. Weiss, whose career choice greatly disappointed his mother. She wanted him to become a lawyer.

A Juilliard School of Music graduate who played the vio-

lin, piano, saxophone and clarinet, Mr. Weiss was a military bandleader in World War II. He soon gained wide recognition as a songwriter over the next few decades.

Among the notable compositions he wrote or co-wrote were "Can't Help Falling in Love," recorded by Elvis Presley; "What a Wonderful World," recorded by Louis Armstrong; "Surrender," recorded by Perry Como, and "Oh! What It Seemed to Be" by Frank Sinatra.

Mr. Weiss had a role in creating the Tokens' hit version of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," which was based on a 1939 song written by South Afri-

can musician Solomon Linda. Mr. Weiss and two collaborators gave the song a reworked melody and new lyrics but kept the refrain — "Wimoweh, wimoweh" — that was popularized in a 1950s version of the song performed by the Weavers. The Tokens' version became a million-selling hit in 1961.

Mr. Weiss also collaborated on several Broadway musicals, including "Mr. Wonderful," which starred Sammy Davis Jr., and "Maggie Flynn," featuring Shirley Jones and Jack Cassidy.

He was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1984.

AP