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Poem by Giavanna Munafo



I romanticize the '60s: sexual liberation, flower power, passive resistance. I think bell bottoms. I think pot brownies. I think anti-war protests, headlines spewing signs of progress: Kennedy sworn in, rocket ships in orbit, the pill mass-produced. I think the countercultural moment of the century spawned a revolutionary gestalt that, having been all my life the black sheep, the misfit, the lefty among rightists, I count as my birthright. Then I look up the pop-chart topper for 15 February 1961 and discover, not Elvis, not Ray Charles or Roy Orbison or even Dion, but, at number one on the day I was born, Lawrence Welk with "Calcutta"—a schmaltzy, eerily familiar tune that loops along, accordions swelling and shrinking, high-heeled, lipsticked women la-la-la-la-la-ing, cocktails sloshing, the '50s hanging on. And, yep, I think, isn't that the year your birth mother, cowed by Catholic aunts and a devout mother, didn't keep you, didn't even look, likely, at your face, knowing, as all the women in her life intoned, she was not fit to mother, having dumped her baby's father—my father, that is—soon after getting, as they said, knocked up, and having, soon thereafter, married a man with a heroin addiction and no interest, as my mother, the one who raised me, stressed, in some other guy's kid.

Art Information

- [Publicity photo from *The Lawrence Welk Show*](#) [5]; public domain.



Giavanna Munafo's poems have appeared in *Redheaded Stepchild*, *Slab*, *New Virginia Review*, *Bloodroot Literary Magazine*, *E•Ratio*, and *The Nearest Poem Anthology*, as well as previous issues of *Talking Writing*. Giavanna is currently at work on a novel, her first.

In addition to teaching in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program at Dartmouth College, Giavanna is a volunteer crisis counselor and does consulting work focused on diversity and equity. She lives in Norwich, Vermont, with her spouse Jim, their son Max, and their border collies Shy and Phe.

"Lawrence Welk" was originally published in 2011 in the blog [Poets on Adoption](#) [6].

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