

Memphis Tennessee 1969. Neil was booked in for a recording session when he learned that there had been a double booking, the other artist being Elvis Presley. Neil immediately postponed his booking to the following day. He then returned to his motel room.

‘Sweet Caroline’ was born on that day. “When it came out of me in that humble little room, I was as surprised as the next guy.”

For years, rumours spread that Diamond wrote the song for Caroline Kennedy, the daughter of the late President John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline. In 2007, Diamond revealed that the rumours were partly true.

“I’ve never discussed it with anybody before... intentionally,” Diamond stated. “I thought maybe I would tell it to Caroline when I met her someday.”

Diamond was inspired to write the song after seeing a picture of 9-year-old Caroline Kennedy in a magazine while staying in Memphis. He was touched by the innocence of the image and felt there was a song somewhere within the picture.

“It was a picture of a little girl dressed to the nines in her riding gear, next to her pony,” Diamond said. “It was such an innocent, wonderful picture.”

Diamond performed the song for the now Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg on her 50th birthday.

“It was a No. 1 record and probably is the biggest, most important song of my career, and I have to thank her for the inspiration,” Diamond said.

While Caroline was a big part of inspiring ‘Sweet Caroline’, the initial inspiration came from an intimate, romantic source. Neil Diamond wrote ‘Sweet Caroline’ with his wife in mind. While he knew of Caroline Kennedy, he wrote the song with then-wife Marcia Murphey. Murphey was a production assistant, and the two married in December 1969, several months after the release of ‘Sweet Caroline’.

“I was writing a song in Memphis, Tennessee, for a session. I needed a three-syllable name. The song was about my wife at the time — her name was Marcia — and I couldn’t get a ‘Marcia’ rhyme,” Diamond explained.

SWEET CAROLINE

NEIL DIAMOND

Where it began
I can't begin to knowin'
But then I know that it's growin' strong

Was in the spring
And spring became the summer
Who'd have believed you'd come along

Hands, touchin' hands
Reachin' out, touchin' me, touchin' you
Sweet Caroline
Good times never seemed so good
I've been inclined
To believe they never would
But now I...

... look at the night
And it don't seem so lonely
We fill it up with only two

And when I hurt
Hurtin' runs off my shoulders
How can I hurt when holdin' you?

Warm, touchin' warm
Reachin' out, touchin' me, touchin' you

Sweet Caroline
Good times never seemed so good
I've been inclined
To believe they never would
Oh, no, no

Sweet Caroline
Good times never seemed so good
I've been inclined
To believe they never would
Sweet Caroline

Neil Diamond - 1969
This Performance - 1972
Album: Hot August Night