

Ombra Mai Fu (My Aunt Rite)

Maria Christiana (Ropalje) Baccus (1883-1966)

July 17, 2021

During my senior year in high school (that would be in Spring of 1963!), our class took a trip to Washington, DC and New York City. Since we were in NYC on Saturday night and Sunday morning, I got special permission to attend church with my Aunt Rite, who lived in Queens County on Long Island. During that service, one particular piece of music stuck in my head, and I've remembered the tune for 58 years. I've remembered the TUNE, but NOT the title and NOT the words! I've heard the tune several times over the years, but with NO WORDS, even with computers and Google, how could I ever find it? Well on Thursday, July 17, 2021, I finally found a way. We were watching old movies starring Jeanette McDonald and Nelson Eddy (fantastic duets, great harmony!), and in the middle of "New Moon" from 1940, I heard the TUNE. I Googled "New Moon 1940 Soundtrack", and I FOUND IT! No wonder I couldn't remember the words and title—it's in ITALIAN! It was "Ombra Mai Fu," by G.F.Handel in an opera from 1738. Picture this: George Washington was only about 5 or 6 years old!

How is that for a story? I can't remember what I did yesterday, but I've remembered that TUNE with NO TITLE or WORDS for 58 years! Some problems and questions take longer to solve than others! NEVER GIVE UP!!

Aunt Rite (Maria Christiana Card) was one of my father's aunts, from Long Island, NY. I don't know where she got the name "Rite," but from my earliest memories of her, she was "Rite" for me! She had only one daughter named Anna Dorothy who had no children, hence no grandchildren of her own. Aunt Rite bought my first bicycle, she wrote letters of encouragement to me throughout my childhood, and she contributed to my education fund by frequently sending me checks for \$100. Aunt Rite visited us in Florida a couple of times, and on our summer visits to New Jersey, we sometimes visited Dad's relatives on Long Island. On my senior class trip to Washington, D.C. and New York, I was given special permission (and careful instructions from Dad about how to navigate in the BIG city of New York!) to visit her and attend church with her that Sunday morning. She was always supportive, encouraging me to study, and proud of me for getting good grades in school.

[Return to homepage](#)

Dr. Robert J. Ropalje, Retired

Seminole State College of Florida

Altamonte Springs Campus

Email: rapaljer@mathinlivingcolor.com