



Dr. Doris Watson

October 31, 1921 - August 18, 2015

Dr. Doris Watson, 93, of Oakhurst, died peacefully at home on August 18, 2015. Doris, daughter of Justus Morton Smith and Nellie Chittick Smith of Oakhurst, was born in Long Branch in 1921. She graduated eighth grade from the Oakhurst School. After high school in New York, Doris received her bachelor's degree from Lebanon Valley College, Pa., and her Master's and Doctorate in Education degrees from Teachers College, Columbia University. Doris was an organist and choir director at First Presbyterian Church, Staten Island. She was the first person instrumental in incorporating English handbells into American churches. In 1947 Doris, as director of the youth choir in the Brick Presbyterian Church, N.Y.C., began a training program in the use of handbells. She served with great distinction there until 1955. With her background of training in voice, piano, and organ, and her many years in choir work, Doris brought the art of bell ringing and the contribution of the Bell Choir to a high state of perfection. Her book, "The Handbell Choir," a manual for church, school, and community groups, was published in 1959 by the H.V.Gray Co., Inc. Also in the 50's Doris appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show with her handbell choir and other T.V. shows as well.

Later, Doris was an elementary and music teacher in the Twp. of Ocean school system for 30 years. At the same time, Doris was a soloist in the Unity Church, Asbury Park. She also was the organist for other churches in the area.

Doris then became the organist and director of music for 19 years at the

Lutheran Church, West Long Branch, where she retired in 2010. For 25 years, Doris and her husband, George, coordinated the music and directed all the handbell choirs in the Tri-State area at an annual Handbell Festival held each year in various churches where all choirs came together.

Doris traveled all over the U.S., camping first with her husband, and later included her two sons. As a family, they loved the outdoors and, of course, their great love for music encompassed their entire lives. Later, Doris traveled internationally to handbell conventions and various functions.

Doris is predeceased by her parents, Justus Morton and Nellie Chittick Smith, her husband, the Rev. George M. Watson, her brother and sister-in-law, Reginald and Eloise Smith, and aunts, uncles and cousins.

To mourn her loss are her sons, Dexter and Dow, Oakhurst, her nephews Reg and Laurin, of Georgia, her niece, Ellen Bryant, North Carolina, some great-nieces and nephews and a host of dear friends whose lives she influenced throughout her life.

A memorial visitation will take place on Saturday, August 29, 2015 from 10am to 12pm with the service beginning at 12 noon at Bongarzone Funeral Home, 2400 Shafto Road, Tinton Falls. In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory can be made to Interfaith Neighbors, 810 Fourth Avenue, Asbury Park, N.J. 07712 , www.interfaithneighbors.org .

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

AUG **29**. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Bongarzone Funeral Home
2400 Shafto Road
Tinton Falls, NJ 07712
(732) 918-6200

Memorial Service

AUG **29**. 12:00 PM (ET)

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(732) 918-6200

Tribute Wall

JB

“ Thank you for your consistent expert, and excellent leadership at the annual bell festivals at which I was a participant as a member of the Brick Church bell choir, and continued peaceful rest.

Joy S. Ressler (nee Bramble) - July 30, 2022 at 11:00 AM

MS

“ I am so sorry I never got to meet Dr. Watson. I acquired her book of handbell music at a yard sale, of all places, back in the 90s and actually used a lot of that music at my own church. Her memory lives on!

Michele Sharik - September 10, 2015 at 09:35 PM

SC

“ Excellent music teacher. Was in two of her plays, A Christmas Carol (Sang Thank You Very Much) and Annie Get Your Gun (sang There's No Business Like Show Business) and was B flat in her bell ringing group. Very nice and talented lady who had a + effect on those she taught, including me. RIP

shawn christen - September 03, 2015 at 09:50 PM

DH

“ As a teenager in Area 2, I attended many church festivals in NJ and PA (at our church) that were led by Doris. We sat in the church pews with our bells on towels on the floor and rang. She will be missed.

Debbie Henning

Debbie Henning - August 28, 2015 at 11:20 AM

DR

“ I offer my deepest sympathy to family and local friends. I met Doris several years ago through National Handbell Seminars. Her name and presence was always recognized and honored with deep respect, yet her unassuming nature downplayed the significance of her groundbreaking contributions to what has become a well established world of ringing. I always looked forward to connecting with her for as long as she was able to attend these events. She shared many stories, pictures and articles with me of her early days in the Guild and of her church program with youth. As I mailed these back to her she told me they were kept in shoe boxes. (I hope these treasures of our beginning years will be preserved). I cherish the memories of cards, notes and phone calls we shared over the subsequent years. In particular I remember her support of me as I made a breast cancer journey 8 years ago. In her calls she would always say, "Be strong like an onion". You will be missed dear friend, but your legacy is eternal. In addition to your many gifts, you were a key player in providing the sure foundation for the art of handbell ringing! I'm honored to have known you. Debbie Rice, AGEHR (now HMA) National President 2005-2008

Debbie Rice - August 27, 2015 at 04:11 PM

CB

“ I remember Dr. Watson very well. In 1969, when I was 8 years old in 3rd grade in the Wanamassa School, my family had just moved to a new area and I was in a new school with all new faces, and my mother had become sick. I was totally disinterested in school, still couldn't tell time (and didn't care), didn't care to read, would never remember to bring my math book home (even when my father tied a string around my finger as a reminder to bring it home), and was basically failing 3rd grade, but there was one thing I loved and could count on Dr. Watson would wheel her wonderful piano into our classroom and make her wonderful music; I loved the songs she picked out for us to sing and still remember some of them...after 46 years. Music was my favorite subject. Thank you, Dr. Watson for making my days in 3rd grade.

Candy Brandmayr - August 27, 2015 at 01:10 PM

BH

“ Bongarzone Funeral Home lit a candle in memory of Dr. Doris Watson



Bongarzone Funeral Home - August 27, 2015 at 12:43 PM