

# Obituaries



In the News | D.C. poverty | Pedestrian killed | Redskins Fans Guide | Book festival




Romney's team: Upbeat, realistic



Behind N. Korea's propaganda star



Redskins-Bengals: 5 things to watch



Who will win an Emmy?

## Nancy Poore Tufts, founder of D.C. bell-ringing group and supplier of bamboo for pandas, dies at 102



Carol Guzy/THE WASHINGTON POST - Nancy Tufts church organist and choir leader led a trailblazing life and once drove a streetcar in wartime Washington

Text Size | Print | E-mail | Reprints

By Matt Schudel, Published: September 22

Nancy Poore Tufts marched for women's suffrage when she was 7, lived in China and the Philippines as a girl and drove ambulances and streetcars in Washington during World War II.

She was best known, however, as a church organist and choir director who founded Washington's first handbell-ringing group in 1954 — and as the source for the fresh bamboo that was fed to the pandas at the National Zoo. She was 102 when she died Sept. 16 of congestive heart failure at Tulip Hill Farm, her home in Fort Washington. A friend, Charles Davidson, confirmed her death.

A skilled pianist, organist and singer with three degrees in music, Mrs. Tufts spent more



### Connect with the Post Obituaries



Obituaries on Facebook

### Featured Advertiser Links



Some CEOs shrug when told THIS causes cancer. FIGHT BACK



FEMUR FRACTURE from Fosamax? File a claim NOW!!!

Save money with 3 simple investing tips!

Looking to buy a home? Visit TWP Real Estate section for the latest open houses.

Click here to learn more about energy jobs. AmericanEnergyWorks.org

Recommend

7

Tweet

0

than 60 years as the music director at several Washington-area churches. She often presented recitals and continued to work as an organist and choir director into her 90s.

In 1952, Mrs. Tufts ordered a set of 14 bells from the Whitechapel foundry in England after hearing a group of bell ringers in Boston.

“I thought that it was so beautiful,” she said in a video for the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers, “and it would be such a splendid activity to add to my church program, because it is especially good for children — or for all people from 9 to 90.”

It took two years for the bells, each tuned to a different musical tone, to arrive in Washington. Within weeks, Mrs. Tufts trained a group of bell ringers and staged a holiday concert.

For the next 33 years, she led the Potomac English Handbell Ringers in performances throughout the region, including frequent performances at Washington National Cathedral, the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and countless convalescent centers and retirement homes.

She led her groups on six tours to England, where the art of handbell ringing began, and often performed at the London foundry where her bells were made. In 1971, Mrs. Tufts and her bell ringers participated in events surrounding the opening of the Kennedy Center, and for 17 consecutive years they donned period costumes to ring in the new year at Colonial Williamsburg.

She and her group twice set world records for continuous bell ringing, topping out at 45 hours in 1981.

Mrs. Tufts wrote “The Art of Handbell Ringing” in the early 1960s and became a nationally recognized figure in the field. She arranged hundreds of pieces of music, from classical works to traditional folk songs, for handbell groups, launched competitions for composers and was a past president of what is now called the Handbell Musicians of America.

When Mrs. Tufts retired in 1987, her collection of bells had grown to contain nearly 80. Hundreds of people, most of them beginning as children, had performed in her groups.

“She’s been a great model to all of us,” Dixon Bell, who joined the Potomac bell ringers in 1964 at age 14, told The Washington Post in 2000. “She introduced us to classical music, fine art and feminism. She’s a real Renaissance woman.”

Nancy Narcissa Poore was born July 6, 1910, in London. Her father was a physician with the U.S. Army, and the family lived in the Philippines and China when Mrs. Tufts was a girl.

Continued [1](#) [2](#) [Next Page](#)

### Sponsored Links

#### Download Google Chrome

Google's Fast, Free and Simple Web Browser. Try It Now  
[www.google.com/chrome](http://www.google.com/chrome)

#### VA Loan Refinance 2.25%

2013 VA Loan Guidelines As Seen On Military Channel !  
 All Loan Amounts  
[www.VeteranLoanAdministration.com](http://www.VeteranLoanAdministration.com)

#### What is Your Flood Risk?

Protect your home from floods. Get your flood risk profile today.  
[www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov)

[Buy a link here](#)

### Rental Listings



**\$1,295 - \$1,745**, 1-2 bedrooms  
 Reid's Prospect Luxury Apartments  
 Woodbridge, VA



**\$1,400 - \$2,300**, Studio-2 bedrooms  
 New Quin  
 Washington, DC



**\$1,024 - \$2,573**, Studio-3 bedrooms  
 Watergate Village  
 Annapolis, MD

Search by City and State, or enter Zip Code

[Go to The Post's Rentals](#)



sshistory wrote:

7:38 AM MDT

Not to take anything away from the wonderful accomplishments that Mrs. Tufts did during her long productive life, but she was not "the first female streetcar driver in Washington."

That distinction went to motorman Mrs. Bessie Allison and conductor Mrs. Edna Cobb as detailed in the April 9, 1943 Washington Post article, "All Woman Trolley Crew Makes First Run in D.C."

### View all comments »

Add your comment | Reply to a comment | Recommend a comment | Report an offensive comment

### More from The Washington Post

- What Olive Garden and Red Lobster tell us about the economy
- Lonely freshman can't start or sustain a conversation
- Ask Amy: Ex-boyfriend should help sexual assault victim
- Johns Hopkins, other major area hospitals left off top-performer list
- Romney team is both defiant and realistic

### Sponsored Headlines

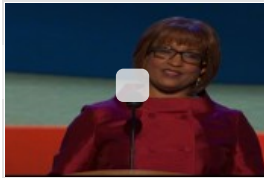
[\[What's this?\]](#)

- 10 Celebrity Relationships We Didn't Know About  
MadameNoire
- ABC buys two comedies from Ben Stiller's Red Hour Television  
Celebrity Cafe
- Niall Ferguson: Obama's Gotta Go  
The Daily Beast
- Economist: Civilization May Not Survive "Death Spiral"  
Money Morning
- This Luscious Vintage Kitchen Will Fill Your Heart With Envy  
Cultivate

### Top Local Stories

### People Also Read

### Most Popular Videos



**Bishop Vashti McKenzie** speaks at DNC



**Thomas Jefferson: Foreign policy**



**John Adams: Foreign policy**



**George Washington: Foreign policy**

### Sponsored Links

#### Download Google Chrome

Google's Fast, Free and Simple Web Browser. Try It Now  
[www.google.com/chrome](http://www.google.com/chrome)

#### VA Loan Refinance 2.25%

2013 VA Loan Guidelines As Seen On Military Channel ! All Loan Amounts  
[www.VeteranLoanAdministration.com](http://www.VeteranLoanAdministration.com)

#### What is Your Flood Risk?

Protect your home from floods. Get your flood risk profile today.  
[www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov)

[Buy a link here](#)

[Politics](#) [Opinions](#) [Local](#) [Sports](#) [National](#) [World](#) [Business](#) [Tech](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Entertainment](#) [Photo](#) [Video](#) [Blogs](#) [Classifieds](#)

#### More ways to get us

Home delivery

Mobile & Apps

RSS

Facebook

Newsletter & Alerts

Washington Post Live

Reprints & Permissions

Post Store

#### Contact Us

Help & Contact Info

Careers

Digital Advertising

Newspaper Advertising

#### About Us

The Washington Post Company

In the community

PostPoints

#### Partners