

# George P. Harlamon

1919 -

"...his public service brought new meaning to the words 'honesty' and 'integrity'."

- Laurence Zollo, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Connecticut Community Colleges

He sought neither the position nor the power, but when it was unexpectedly thrust upon him, he proved most worthy of the challenge. Born George Peter Harlamon in Waterbury on February 5th, 1919, to Peter and Agnes Harlamon, he was schooled locally, graduating from Crosby High School in 1936. His education was interrupted when he was called upon to help in the family confectionery enterprise in Fairfield, Connecticut and by military duty in World War II, where he served with distinction in the Philippines. Upon his discharge, he resumed his education by earning a bachelor's degree with honors in accounting from Fordham University. A master's degree in business administration from the University of Connecticut was to follow.

He began his career with the General Accounting Office in Washington, D. C., but he was soon to return home to the Chase Brass and Copper Company, where he rose to the position of comptroller. In 1966 he became comptroller of the Waterbury National Bank. Meanwhile, with wife Katherine, he was raising his family, sons Peter and James, while also serving as an active and devoted member of the Greek Orthodox Church. Civic minded, he soon found himself involved in local politics, joining the Republican Party. Shortly thereafter, he was elected alderman. His colleagues quickly recognized his obvious leadership abilities and he was chosen President of the Board of Aldermen, which in turn caused him to succeed Mayor Frederick W. Palomba upon his sudden incapacitating illness in February 1968. Thus began the chain of events that was to cause this unassuming man of faith and family to have his rendezvous with destiny.

It was in early July of 1969 that Waterbury was caught up in the battle for civil rights that was sweeping the country. Angry citizens were rioting in the streets and a number of buildings and businesses were either destroyed or vandalized. Mayor Harlamon responded boldly, and against the advice of many, met face to face with civil rights leaders, enlisting their aid to prevent further rioting. It was said that he neither flinched nor flailed but instead, with a calming presence, persuaded them to join with him to restore tranquility to the community.



Several of the leaders were later to say that the trust he placed in them made them feel that they could not let him down. So where an overwhelming police presence and curfew had failed, he was able to succeed.

Following his distinguished tenure as mayor, where he championed the causes of education, fire and water services, George Harlamon continued to contribute to the improvement of the hometown he loved. He proved to be an effective President of the Waterbury Park Board, working tirelessly to effect upgrades and reforms in the area of municipal recreation. He served on the city boards of Finance and Public Works as well as the Red Cross, Mattatuck Museum, Waterbury Symphony Orchestra, Exchange Club, YMCA, and Child Guidance Clinic and later was adjunct professor of Accounting and Federal Tax Law at both Mattatuck Community College and Teikyo Post College.

However, it will always be his primary legacy to be remembered as the mayor who, by quiet but firm diplomacy, managed against seemingly insurmountable odds to bring peace to his troubled city.