



## Ann Uccello of West Hartford

### *The Unintentional Pioneer*

It wasn't like Antonina "Ann" Uccello, 96, of West Hartford grew up thinking: "I want to be a pioneer ... a trailblazer ... a feminist."

She just lived her life – and became one.

The second oldest of five daughters of Italian immigrants, Ann graduated with honors from Weaver High School and Saint Joseph College. She worked at G. Fox for the legendary Beatrice Fox Auerbach, but was soon drawn toward politics.

A Republican, she served for two terms on the Hartford City Council, and then made history when she was elected Mayor in 1967: She was not only the first female Mayor in Connecticut, but also the first female Mayor of any U.S. capital. In her inaugural address, she outlined a fiscally conservative but socially liberal agenda, including proposals to protect children from lead poisoning, to create low- and moderate-income housing, and to set up an "Info-Mobile" to travel the city with news of jobs and services.

Ann's tenure coincided with a racially tense and divisive period in the country's history. On the night that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, against the advice of some of her advisors, Ann traveled to the North End of Hartford, listening to her heartbroken constituents and sympathizing with their anger and confusion about his death. She was seen as a pragmatic leader and calming influence; in a 1970 poll, her Greater Hartford approval rating was 81%.

In 1970, Ann moved to Washington, DC, to become the first Director of Consumer Affairs in the U.S. Department of Transportation. She served three Presidents – Nixon, Ford, and Carter – before coming back home to Hartford to help run her family's insurance business.

Ann Uccello has earned many accolades over the years, including an honorary doctorate and the Distinguished Alumna Award from her beloved alma mater, St. Joe's. In 2008, Hartford's Ann Street was renamed Ann Uccello Street, and in 2016, a street in her father's hometown in Italy was dedicated in her name.

In 1999, when Ann was inducted into the CT Women's Hall of Fame, she reflected on her life and career: "I really don't dwell on 'I could have' or 'I should have,' but what I did. And I'm proud of it."