

## ***Jewel Lafontant-Mankarious, Lawyer and U.S. Official, Dies***

**By Eric Pace** June 3, 1997

Jewel Lafontant-Mankarious, a Chicago lawyer who held high posts in the Nixon and Bush Administrations, was active in the civil rights movement and was on the boards of major corporations, died on Saturday at her home in Chicago. She was 75.

The cause of death was breast cancer, family members said.

Mrs. Lafontant-Mankarious, a Republican, was known as Jewel S. Lafontant when she served in the Nixon and Bush Administrations. Prior to that, President Richard M. Nixon had appointed her to the Justice Department as Deputy Solicitor General -- the first woman and the first black person to hold so high a position in the Solicitor General's office. She held that post from 1973 to 1975. Under President George Bush, from 1989 to 1993, she was in the State Department with the concurrent titles of ambassador-at-large and coordinator of refugee affairs.

In the civil rights field, she was a founding member of the Congress of Racial Equality, an officer of the Chicago chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and on the board of the American Civil Liberties Union. During the early 1940's, The Chicago Sun-Times reported yesterday, "She brought change to the city by participating in sit-ins at Loop restaurants." In a 1991 interview, she recalled, "Often we were spat upon and physically abused."

Times changed, and from 1965 to 1967 she was on the President's Council on Minority Business Enterprise. In the early 1970's Ebony magazine named her one of the 100 most influential black Americans.

The corporate boards she was on over the years included those of the Mobil Corporation, Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States, Trans World Airlines, Revlon, Inc., Harte-Hanks Communications, the Hanes Corporation and the Bendix Corporation

During her career, she was also a director of nonprofit institutions including Oberlin College, Howard University and Tuskegee Institute. And she received numerous awards and honorary degrees.

At her death she was a partner in the Chicago law firm of Holleb & Coff, which she joined in 1993. Her law practice, in her years there, was concentrated in the areas of corporate law, labor and employment law, and governmental and international relations.

Jewel Stradford was born in Chicago, the daughter of C. Francis Stradford -- a lawyer -- and Aida Arabella Cartera, and grew up there. She graduated in 1943 from Oberlin College and received a law degree in 1946 from the University of Chicago.

But afterward, The Sun-Times reported, she could not obtain office space, no major white law firm would employ her, and the Chicago Bar Association would not admit her as a member. In 1947, she went to work in the legal aid bureau of a charitable organization, before going on to work for a succession of Chicago law firms and doing much trial work.

During the Eisenhower Administration, from 1955 to 1958, she served as assistant United States attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. In 1960, she seconded the nomination of Mr. Nixon as Republican candidate for President, but he was defeated by John F. Kennedy.

As the Bush Administration's coordinator for refugee affairs, she dealt with a staggering variety of problems. In 1989, when Moscow was permitting record numbers of Soviet Jews and Pentecostals to leave its soil, she declared that the Bush Administration wanted to "get control over the flow" of emigres. In 1990, she went to London and reaffirmed a Bush Administration pledge that the United States would help to settle half of all new Vietnamese boat people -- refugees who fled their country by sea and mostly went to camps in the British crown colony of Hong Kong.

In the same year, she went to the African nation of Malawi, which had been flooded with refugees from a civil war in neighboring Mozambique.

Her 1946 marriage to John Rogers ended in divorce in 1961. Later that year she married H. Ernest Lafontant, and he died in 1976.

She is survived by her husband of seven years, Naguib S. Mankarious; a son, John W. Rogers Jr. of Chicago, and a granddaughter.