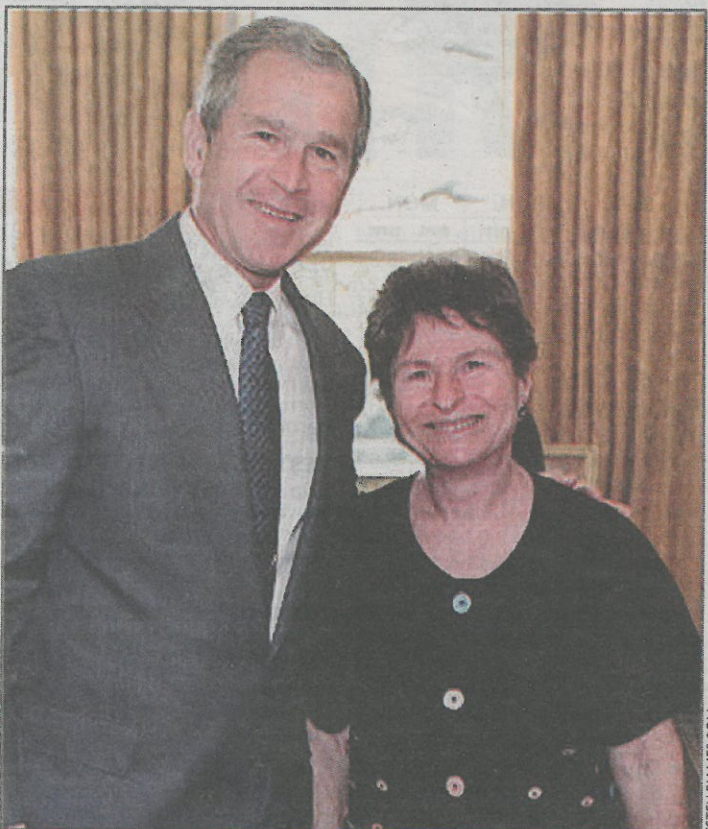


LONG ISLAND

Estelle James, 79, Stony Brook economist



Economist and professor Estelle James served on President George W. Bush's Commission to Strengthen Social Security.

BY NICHOLAS SPANGLER
nicholas.spangler@newsday.com

Estelle James, a World Bank and Stony Brook University economist who influenced a debate on pension reform across the world, died at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 13. She was 79.

The cause was complications of cancer, said her son, David Lazer of Belmont, Massachusetts.

James served on President George W. Bush's Commission to Strengthen Social Security and was lead author of "Averting the Old Age Crisis," a 1994 World Bank publication written as the number of global elderly was swelling and old-age security systems across the world faced trouble.

The scope of the report was unparalleled, drawing on data from scores of nations across the world. "It was the first time the global landscape of pension policy and pension systems was laid out," said Robert Palacios, a Washington, D.C.-based World Bank economist who worked on it.

The report's authors argued that a "multipillar" system in-

cluding mandatory publicly and privately managed contributions, as well as voluntary savings, is best. It also emphasized the need to provide a minimum income for the elderly in countries where most workers were not covered by the traditional pension system.

James was born in the Bronx on Dec. 1, 1935, and raised in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Her father, Abraham Dinerstein, was an electrician; her mother, Lina, was a seamstress.

She attended Cornell University on a scholarship from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, graduating in 1956 from the School of Industrial Relations with what was then the highest average in the school's history. She earned her doctorate in economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1961.

Most of James' work was written for scholars and policymakers. Her first book, "Hoffa and the Teamsters: A study of Union Power," written with then-husband Ralph James and published in 1965, was an exception; one reviewer called it "a brilliant analysis of the Hoffa

power structure." The two authors witnessed phone calls where the labor leader ordered beatings and instructed underlings to shoot at but not kill nonunion truckers.

James taught at Stony Brook from 1972 to 1994, served as provost and economics department chair, and was professor emeritus from her retirement in 1994 through this year. She served as fellow at numerous universities and think tanks.

She lived in East Setauket during much of her time with Stony Brook, but divided her time in recent years between Washington, D.C., and Sarasota, Florida.

Besides her son, James is survived by daughter Deborah James of Washington, D.C.; brother Sidney Dinerstein of Naperville, Illinois; and partner Albert Caron of Washington, D.C. She was predeceased by Ralph James, from whom she was divorced; by husband Harry Lazer and companion Sam Levine.

A funeral was held in Clarksburg, Maryland, last month. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Doctors Without Borders.