**CITATION: GEORGE FRANCIS RAYNER ELLIS**

George Ellis FRS is Professor Emeritus at the University of Cape Town, specialising in general relativity theory and cosmology, but also working in complexity theory and G C McVittie Visiting Professor of Astronomy, Queen Mary (London University).

Born in 1939, in Johannesburg, Ellis started his education at Michaelhouse, followed by the University of Cape Town, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics with distinction. He also represented the university in fencing, rowing and flying.

While a student at Cambridge University, where he received a Ph. D. in Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics in 1964, he was on college rowing teams. At Cambridge, Ellis served as a research fellow from 1965 to 1967, was assistant lecturer in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics until 1970, and was then appointed as university lecturer, serving until 1974.

Ellis rapidly established himself within academic circles, becoming a visiting professor at the Enrico Fermi Institute at the University of Chicago in 1970, a lecturer at the Cargese Summer School in Corsica in 1971 and the Erice Summer School in Sicily in 1972, and a visiting H3 professor at the University of Hamburg, in 1972.

In the following year, Ellis returned to South Africa to accept an appointment as Professor of Applied Mathematics at the University of Cape Town, a position he held until his retirement in 2005.

A veritable polymath, he has published papers (more than 500 including 17 in Nature) and books, not only on physics and cosmology (including the 1973 classic The Large-Scale Structure of Space-Time, co-authored with Stephen Hawking, which to date remains the absolute standard reference in the field of general relativity) but also on philosophy, complexity theory, neuroscience, education and even low-income housing.

Among the highlights of his contributions to scientific and other scholarly societies are: serving as President of the International Society on General Relativity and Gravitation from 1989 – 1992 and President of the International Society for Science and Religion. He also served as a member of the drafting team of the erstwhile DACST Green Paper on Science and Technology after President Mandela’s election, which lead to the S & T White Paper.

Ellis was a vocal opponent of apartheid during the National Party reign in the 1970s and 1980s, and it is during this period that Ellis' research focused on the more philosophical aspects of cosmology, for which he won the Templeton Prize. He is a recipient of many awards and recognitions including: the Order of the Star of South Africa by President Nelson Mandela, in 1999; the Order of Mapungubwe awarded by President Thabo Mbeki; honorary degrees from UCT and 3 other universities and the De Beers gold medal by the South African Institute of Physics.

On 18 May 2007, he was elected a Fellow of the British Royal Society – one of the oldest (and certainly most prestigious) learned societies in the world. In 2005 Ellis appeared as a guest speaker at the Nobel Conference in St. Peter, Minnesota.

Given his distinguished contribution to the field of Theoretical Physics, and generally to his contribution to the South African Society at large, George certainly deserves the recognition of being awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.