

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George Philander

PERSON

Philander, S. George

**Alternative Names:** George Philander;

**Life Dates:** August 25, 1942-

**Place of Birth:** Calendon, South Africa

**Work:** Princeton, NJ

**Occupations:** Atmospheric Scientist

## Biographical Note

Professor and atmospheric scientist S. George Philander was born on August 25, 1942 in Calendon, Republic of South Africa. His father was the noted Afrikaans poet and the headmaster of the Belgravia High School in Athlone. Philander received his B.S. degree in applied mathematics and physics from the University of Cape Town in 1962. When apartheid laws were sanctioned in South Africa, his family decided to move to New York City. He went on to attend Harvard University and graduated in 1980 with

his Ph.D. degree in applied mathematics.

Following graduation, Philander was awarded a post-doctoral fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the department of meteorology. He then became a research associate in the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Program at Princeton University, and was promoted in 1978 to senior research oceanographer of the program. Philander held the position for eleven years until he was appointed as a full professor of geosciences and director of the program in atmospheric and oceanic studies at Princeton University in 1990. He served as chair of the Department of Geosciences at Princeton University from 1994 to 2001 and was then named the Knox Taylor Professor of Geosciences at Princeton University in 2005. Throughout his career, Philander has served as a consultant to the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva, Switzerland and as a visiting professor at the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, France. His research on oceanic and meteorological changes have resulted in the publication of over one hundred academic papers, nine chapters in books, and three books on such topics as El Niño, the Southern Oscillation, and global warming. In 2007, he finally returned to South Africa and joined the University of Cape Town as a research professor.

Philander was elected as a Fellow into the American Meteorological Society in 1986, the American Geophysical Union in 1991, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2003. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences in 2004. The University of Cape Town bestowed upon Philander an Honorary Doctorate of Science degree in 2007.

S. George Philander was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on March 8, 2013.

## **Related Entries**

**University of Cape Town** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**B.S.**

**University of Cape Town** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Applied Math Honours**

**Harvard University** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)**

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1942 to ?]

**Postdoctoral Fellow, Dept. of Meteorology**

**Princeton University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1987 to 1987]

**Research Associate. Geophysical Fluid Dynamics  
Program**

**World Meteorological Society** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1976 to ?]

**Consultant**

**NOAA** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1978 to 1989]

**Senior Research Oceanographer, Geophysical  
Fluid Dynamics Laboratory**

**Museum National d'Histoire** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1974 to ?]

**Visiting Professor**

**Princeton University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1943 to 1943]

**Professor of Geosciences**

**Princeton University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1990 to 2006]

**Director of the Program in Atmospheric and  
Oceanic Sciences**

**Princeton University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1992 to ?]

**Chairman, Department of Geosciences**

**California Institute of Technology** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2002 to 2002]

**Gordon Moore Scholar**

**Princeton University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1976 to 1990]

**Knox Taylor Professor of Geosciences**

**University of Cape Town** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1982 to ?]

**Research Professor**

**African Centre for Climate and Earth System Science  
(ACCESS)** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2007 to 2007]

**Research Director**

**Council of the International Center for Theoretical  
Physics** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Committee on Science and Arts of the Franklin  
Institute** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology Visiting  
Committee** [MEMBEROF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**University Corporation for Atmospheric Research**

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Trustee**

**Commission on Geosciences, Environment and  
Resources of the National Academy of Sciences**

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**National Academy of Sciences (NAS)** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**