

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George Philander

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Philander, S. George
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George Philander,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 8, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:48:48).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Atmospheric scientist George Philander (1942 - ) , former Knox Taylor Professor of Geosciences at Princeton University, is a Fellow of the American Meteorological Society, the American Geophysical Union, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Philander was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 8, 2013, in Princeton, New Jersey. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_064
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

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.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with George Philander was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 8, 2013, in Princeton, New Jersey, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Atmospheric scientist George Philander (1942 - ) , former Knox Taylor Professor of Geosciences at Princeton University, is a Fellow of the American Meteorological Society, the American Geophysical Union, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

## **Restrictions on Use**

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## **Related Material**

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## **Controlled Access Terms**

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### **Persons:**

Philander, S. George

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Philander, S. George--Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Princeton University

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## **Occupations:**

Atmospheric Scientist

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ScienceMakers

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## **Administrative Information**

### **Custodial History**

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### **Preferred Citation**

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George Philander, March 8, 2013. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with George Philander, Section  
A2013\_064\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:04 2013/03/08

George Philander talks about his family background. His mother, Alice Harker, was born in Plettenberg Bay in Cape Town, South Africa, which was, at the time, a small fishing village. Also during that time, living under Apartheid, teaching was the most demanded and acclaimed profession. After graduating from college in Cape Town, she became a teacher. Philander's father, Peter John Philander, was born in Caledon, South Africa, a small agricultural village. He also became a teacher, even serving as a headmaster at one point in time, as well as a well-known poet and author in South Africa. Philander has two younger brothers who are both medical doctors that practice in the United States. Philander talks about the institution of Apartheid, the segregated education system, and the historical context of race relations in South Africa.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with George Philander, Section  
A2013\_064\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:43 2013/03/08

George Philander was born and raised in South Africa. He talks about his early memories of growing up there and reflects on his experience living under Apartheid. Philander attended Athlone High School in Caledon,

South Africa. His favorite teacher was his music teacher, Hartley, who influenced his appreciation for the classical music of Beethoven and Bach. His favorite subject was math because he liked manipulating symbols and it was a subject that he liked to practice independently. While he always did well in school, he considers his teachers to have been under qualified. Philander also critiques the South African education system as not adequately facilitating learning, but instead, training students to merely pass exams. He admires the structure and freedom to pursue a greater variety of interests in the U.S. education system. After graduating from high school, Philander attended the University of Cape Town, where he majored in mathematics.

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Video Oral History Interview with George Philander, Section  
A2013\_064\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:31 2013/03/08

George Philander studied mathematics at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa. The university is nicknamed “Moscow on the Hill” for its opposition to Apartheid in higher education. After receiving his B.S. degree in 1962, he continued at UCT to earn his Applied Maths Honors in 1963. At the age of 21, Philander received a Fulbright Scholarship to pursue his Ph.D. degree at Harvard University in Boston, Massachusetts. There, he became fascinated with applied mathematics, and particularly interested in how mathematics could be implemented to understand phenomena related to weather and the atmosphere. Philander talks about his experience at Harvard, the state of education in South Africa, and the declining appreciation of science in the United States.

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Video Oral History Interview with George Philander, Section  
A2013\_064\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:06 2013/03/08

George Philander received his Ph.D. degree in applied mathematics from Harvard University in 1970. His dissertation research was an interdisciplinary project that focused on fluid dynamics of equatorial currents. Later that year, he served as a post-doctoral fellow in the department of meteorology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In 1971, Philander joined Princeton University's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Program as a research associate. In around 1973, he and his wife, who he met while accompanying Jule Gregory Charney on his sabbatical leave in California, moved to England where he studied the Tropical Atlantic. Philander talks about his experiences at the various Ivy League institutions he has attended as well as his experience living in England. He also talks about the issues scientists have with communicating with the public and John von Neumann's scientific contributions.

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Video Oral History Interview with George Philander, Section  
A2013\_064\_001\_005, TRT: 5:28:39 2013/03/08

George Philander explains what El Nino and La Nina oscillation's are and talks about their role in climate patterns. Philander also talks about Warren Washington and the progress of weather predicting, Nelson Mandela, and his hopes for science development in South Africa. He also talks about the political discourse around global warming and its curtailing progress towards much needed discovery.

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Video Oral History Interview with George Philander, Section  
A2013\_064\_001\_006, TRT: 6:23:45 2013/03/08

George Philander's reflections on global warming, entitled 'Where are you from? Why are you here? An African Perspective on Global Warming', was published in the Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Science in 2009. Although he acknowledges that there is much left to be discovered due to our lack of understanding of what is happening to the planet, Philander considers there to be exciting opportunities for discovery available in scientific fields. Most recently, he has been working on educational outreach efforts in South Africa, which he deems as a "scientific enterprise." He talks about his hopes for South Africa, as well as his hopes for the African American community. Philander also reflects on his legacy and life choices, talks about his family, and talks about how he would like to be remembered. Finally, he describes his photos.

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