

## **CITATION FOR GEOFFREY DE JAGER**

**Honorary graduand, Rhodes University, 14 April 2012**

By Professor Paul Maylam

Rhodes University has a logo that carries the words 'where leaders learn' – by learning we do not just mean the acquisition of knowledge, but also the inculcation of human values, integrity, initiative, compassion, an aesthetic sense, and a commitment to public service and the common good. All of these qualities are embodied in today's honorary graduand and graduate of Rhodes University, Geoffrey de Jager.

Here is a multi-faceted person. Starting out his career as a lawyer, and becoming the youngest partner ever at one of the country's most prestigious law firms, he soon turned to banking – at the age of thirty becoming one of the founding directors of Rand Merchant Bank, where he served as executive director for seven years. The financial sector continued to be his main focus of attention after emigrating to the UK in 1987 – there establishing two stock-broking firms, and later founding, together with his twin brother, Douglas, an investment company, Anglo Suisse Investments Holdings, that concentrated on manufacturing in South Africa, the UK and Australia – and would in time sell off one of its subsidiaries to a South African group in the cause of black empowerment.

One of Anglo Suisse's main UK companies has been Sharp Interpack – a company in which the De Jagers invested heavily, and one of the first food-packaging companies in the UK to make extensive use of recycled materials – so successfully that in 2009, at the prestigious Best Factory Awards ceremony it received the top award for its commitment to health, safety and the environment. Demonstrating that environmentalism can be compatible with business success, Sharp captured more than 60% of the UK's packaging market by 2010. These have not

been Geoffrey de Jager's only business interests – others include a company involved in the high-tech extraction and analysis of DNA.

The foundations for this highly successful business career were in large part laid here in Grahamstown. Born in Oudtshoorn, Geoffrey de Jager attended Kingswood College, before moving on to Rhodes where he graduated with a B.Comm. in 1973 – he recalls how he sometimes missed scheduled lectures so that he could attend lectures in other subjects, such as philosophy and physics, making up for the missed lectures with his own reading – such was his curiosity and hunger for learning. It was at Rhodes, too, that his entrepreneurial aptitude was developed – having to pay his own fees he set up a small trading business in town. The B.Comm. was to be followed by an LL.B. at what was then the University of Natal. How many B.Comm. graduands on this stage will be inspired to follow in his footsteps?

One would hope that any of today's graduands who do achieve business success would also emulate Geoffrey de Jager's exemplary record as a philanthropist. Especially notable has been the enormous support he has given to educational causes in South Africa and the UK – as a patron, for instance, of the Sparrow Schools Foundation, which provides remedial and special needs education to disadvantaged primary school children living in Johannesburg's townships – giving generously to this Foundation, enabling it to reach its annual spending target, meeting regularly with the Sparrow Schools founder, attending concerts given by the Sparrow children on their choir and drama tours in the UK.

Living in Oxford, as he does, Geoffrey de Jager has extended his benefaction to Oxford University, particularly to Trinity College, where he is an honorary fellow – as well as being a member of the Vice-Chancellor's Circle, established to honour

those who have made a substantial contribution to Oxford through their philanthropy.

One of the chief beneficiaries of Geoffrey's generosity has been his *alma mater*, Rhodes University – in his role as a trustee of the Rhodes University UK Trust for several years, and as chair of the Trust since last year. This Trust is a registered UK charity and provides funding and support for the university's educational activities. The seven trustees all volunteer their time free of charge, and their fund-raising endeavours have brought many benefits to Rhodes – scholarships and bursaries for disadvantaged students, the enhanced development of library services, the purchase of computer equipment for residences. In his new role as chair Geoffrey de Jager has realigned the work of the Trust, opening new doors and networking opportunities. The university has also benefited enormously from his own personal generosity – whether it be his sponsorship of fund-raising dinners in London, or his very substantial donations to the university. Rhodes University is much indebted to our honorary graduand for all the work he has done on our behalf – we thank you for generosity, for your endeavour, and for your time, in the service of Rhodes University.

A B.Comm. degree and a life in business might suggest an image of a person wholly immersed in the commercial world. Not so at all. Geoffrey de Jager is a notable patron of the arts – serving as a trustee of the Oxford Philomusica, Oxford University's orchestra in residence which collaborates with the faculty of music in educational programmes for the student community. He is a collector of art and books, and a patron of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the Garsington Opera and the Grange Park Opera – all this in keeping with his keen interest in music and art.

Our honorary graduand is a man who has combined business acumen with an aesthetic sense and a generosity of spirit, all

the time drawing upon a restless mind that constantly explores new fields of knowledge. With his enormous achievement and success also comes great humility. He has been described as 'a truly humble person' and as 'a wonderful man who touches for the better almost every person and institution with whom he deals'. Rhodes University is certainly one such institution. So today we are proud to honour an eminent graduate – entrepreneur, philanthropist, educational benefactor and patron of the arts.

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour to request you to confer on Geoffrey John de Jager the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.