

Vice Chancellor, I have the honour to present, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science, honoris causa, Bernard Lewis Fanaroff.

The Northern Cape is the largest and most sparsely populated province in South Africa. Besides some sheep farming, not much goes on. The arid desert stretches on and on. In the distance, a flat topped *butte*. Every few years, a rainstorm. And then, suddenly, in May 2012, the tiny dorp of Carnarvon became the coolest spot in the cosmos. After more than a decade of work by the South African Square Kilometre Array team, Carnarvon got to be the site of the world's biggest ever science project. Bernie Fanaroff had made the big big skies and the dryness and the emptiness and nothingness worth **something**.

If you want to look into the cosmos, there are only three things you can do from the ground: optical, gamma ray and radio wave astronomy. We already had optical and gamma ray telescopes, so the only missing element was radio. Astronomers had already done a back-of-the-envelope calculation and worked out that, in order to be sufficiently sensitive, the collecting area of the telescope would have to be a square kilometre. Hence the SKA – Square Kilometre Array.

When the idea for the South African SKA bid was first conceived, the Department of Science and Technology needed somebody to direct the project: somebody who was trusted; who had credibility and was respected by government, and somebody who could hold his own with scientists. *And of course*, that person was Bernie Fanaroff^[1].

Bernie Fanaroff is far more than the SKA – as big as that is – he has spent many years honing his skills and developing his talents.

His shrewd negotiating and strategizing skills were honed in the South African trade union movement in the 1970s, when he worked full time for MAWU and then NUMSA. He devoted 18 years to this work, and was totally consumed by it^[2]. He lived in a simple flat in Hillbrow, in an almost derelict building^[3], working, working, working. Many people thought that he was a lawyer, with his ability to “cut a deal” and his sophisticated strategizing.

His patience and stubbornness were honed in government, where he was Deputy Director General in the Office of the President, Head of the RDP Office and Advisor to the Minister of Safety and Security.

So, as the director of the SKA project, his job description was somebody who could convince: farmers to have thousands of dishes all over their farms, the Northern Cape premier that it was ok to have no cell phone signal in the province for 50 years, the Minister of Finance that he wouldn't be responsible for funding it, and of course somebody who could convince South Africans that we could do something that looked absolutely impossible... host the world's biggest ever science project

It was only occasionally, in passing, that he might mention something about the stars, and then it would emerge that not only did he have a PhD from the Cavendish in Cambridge, but that the Fanaroff-Riley radio source classification is named after him. And not only that, but that his paper about that classification (*The morphology of extra galactic radio sources*), which was published 40 years ago (in 1974) has 2103 citations^[4], and is still being cited today.

Back in Carnarvon, on the vast beige plateau^[5], the real tribute to Bernie Fanaroff, is the soundless site that will eventually be the focus of the SKA - listening, listening, listening to the stars.

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1. Adam, R., *Personal Communication*, 6 May 2014
2. Fanaroff, B.L., *Personal Communication*, 12 May 2014
3. Fiske, I., *Personal Communication*, 12 May 2014
4. Google Scholar Citation Analysis, 2014.

Strictly embargoed until 15h00 on Thursday 12 June 2014

5. **Amato, C. (3 June 2012). "Starstruck in Carnarvon." Times Live. Retrieved 30 April 2014, from http://www.ska.ac.za/download/clipping_tl_jun2012.pdf.**