

Preface by the Editors

In the *platteland* (flatland, farmland) of deepest South-Africa it is still common amongst rural folks of the Afrikaans speaking community to address elderly gentlemen with *oom* (uncle), regardless of whether or not there are actual family relationships (quite similar to rural Russians kindly addressing elderly women as “granny”). When we heard that one of Derrick’s undergraduate students, a genuine *boeremeisie* (farmgirl) from the *platteland*, indeed addressed him as *oom* – how sweet! – instead of “mister” or “professor” we knew that the time had arrived for preparing a little birthday surprise: Colloquium and Festschrift at the Occasion of the 60th Birthday of Derrick Kourie! To many of us, from South-Africa or from abroad, Derrick has been a great mentor, supervisor, colleague and friend throughout the years. Thus, each of us could tell long stories about when and how he or she met him for the very first time and how their cooperation and friendship has been evolving from year to year. A few of these stories and anecdotes are told in the *Greetings* section in Part 1 of this festschrift, followed by the more academic *Papers* section in Part 2. It was some organisational challenge to trace and retrieve the current addresses of a considerable number of Derrick’s former students and non-resident colleagues and to send out the invitations and call for papers to this colloquium without letting the plan leak into the public domain, such as not to spoil the birthday surprise which we wanted to present to Derrick at this very occasion. Knowing Derrick as an easy-going fellow who does not care much for pomp and ceremony we deliberately decided to keep this celebration as small and friendly as possible. For this reason we decided to “hijack” one day of Derrick’s annual research group meeting, the *Espresso/Fastar* Workshop – this year held at the Windy Brow farm in the *highveld* outside of Pretoria. In this way, we also did not need to make Derrick “suspicious” by inviting him to another location with cumbersome arguments. A funny consequence of this secrecy is

that Derrick became twice a co-author for his own festschrift, not knowing to where his co-authors would actually submit their papers :) The colloquium organisers and festschrift editors would like to thank a number of people, friends and colleagues, without whom this event would not have been possible. First of all, of course, there is Derrick himself – because of him we come together in these days: *Happy birthday dear Derrick*, and many thanks for being a wonderful colleague, mentor, supervisor and friend throughout the years! Then there are Judith Bishop, Loek Cleophas and Vreda Pieterse, who supported the editors with information retrieval, organisational assistance as well as a string of good ideas. Standard Corporate and Investment Bank (Business Solutions Division) is generously sponsoring the Espresso workshop, including the scientific portion of Derrick’s colloquium: special thanks go to Vickey Ganesh and Keith Alexander for driving and enabling this. Last but not least there is everybody who followed our invitation, contributed a paper to this festschrift, and/or traveled to this colloquium to celebrate the day with us. Our invitation criteria were not only defined as “special work-relations with Derrick” now or in the past, but also a minimum level of academic maturity in form of an MSc degree: this would give the invited authors the “licence” to write their own papers without professorial supervision. We regret that some of Derrick’s brightest current students were ruled out by this decision, but somewhere we had to draw a line without exception. Due to various circumstances not every invitee was able to make the journey to the colloquium, though we are sure that they will join us *in spiritu* – from afar. These informal pre-proceedings of this festschrift are available for download from a local website.¹ The final version of this festschrift shall be published (with ISBN) after this colloquium.

Pretoria, South-Africa, June 2008,
Stefan Gruner and **Bruce Watson**,
Colloquium Organisers and Festschrift Editors.

¹ <http://www.cs.up.ac.za/~sgruner/Festschrift/>