

NEWS FROM:



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UCT's new Italian knight dedicates award to his father

At a ceremony at the Italian Ambassador's residence in Cape Town in December, Professor Mino Caira of the University of Cape Town was formally presented with the title of *Cavaliere dell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana* (Knight of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic).

Caira received the award for his celebrated academic work in the field of chemistry, his longstanding collaborations with universities and pharmaceutical companies in Italy, and his role as president of the Cape Town branch of the Zonderwater Block Association of Ex-POWs for more than a decade. Zonderwater, a farm area near Johannesburg, is where Italian prisoners of war were held between 1941 and 1947. Caira's father was one of the more than 90 000 Italian POWs in the camp, and he remained in South Africa after the war.

These days the association is made up mainly of the descendants of the original POWs, most of whom, like Caira's father, have since died. "When accepting the award, my first thought was of my father, and I silently dedicated the award to his memory," said Caira.

Caira is the third UCT academic to be honoured in this way: Emeritus Professor Luigi Nassimbeni, his neighbour in the Department of Chemistry, has also been knighted by Italy, as has the late Professor Cornelia Saxby of the Italian section of UCT's School of Languages and Literature.

Caira is Professor of Physical Chemistry and Director of the Centre for Supramolecular Chemistry Research in the Faculty of Science. His research "can lead to improved drug formulations and solid drug forms that are more stable or that have other advantages for industrial processing", he said.

Among his accomplishments, Caira also holds an honorary doctorate. He is a Lifetime Fellow of UCT and a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa. In 2009 he was awarded the Gold Medal of the South African Chemical Institute – awarded to a person whose scientific

contribution in the field of chemistry or chemical technology is adjudged to be of outstanding merit.

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