



A view of the queue to glance at Jupiter with the ESO 11-inch Celestron.



A view of the ESO 11-inch Celestron telescope. Also the youngest were much interested in seeing Jupiter!

collective and enthusiastic help of many ESO staff members in the preparation of the exhibit and in the most friendly attention to the public. In particular, we highly appreciated the competence of Messrs. Rolando Vega and Eduardo Matamoros during the setting-up of the exhibit and the telescope as well as their extraordinary patience in attending the public during observing time and the help of Mr. Jorge Peralta (attending our stand). We would also like to acknowledge the valuable assistance at La Silla of Messrs. Jaime Alonso and Aldo Pizarro who helped with the electronics of the telescope, and Armando Bruna and Victor Echeverria who built a new mount for it.

5. Conclusion

Among the large public who attended our stands and telescope, a few characters gave us some occasions to smile and we would like to share those with the readers: an old couple, after a glance at our sign (La Silla), made an immediate link with the chairs (*sillas* in Spanish) in front of our video screen, and decided to buy them on the spot (it was not easy to convince them they were not for sale!); this other man was very disappointed to realize that even with a telescope one could not watch the sun at night; that lady blamed us for reproducing in our NTT Saturn picture (the one with the white spot) the colours she had painted on some plates (after being convinced of our good faith, she left with the assurance that heavens had contacted her while she was painting!)

Other reactions were more touching: the old lady crying and kissing us for having given her the possibility to see a planet before she dies; the many people kneeling and crossing themselves to thank God for the beauty of the uni-

verse; some who just could not believe that they were actually seeing a "real" planet. Finally, one anecdote deserves special mention: with the telescope pointing at Jupiter, a drawing was made of the planet and its 4 largest "moons", with a note saying that Jupiter has 16 "moons" in total. Several women were standing near the telescope, very interested and enthusiastic about what other people were seeing, but absolutely refused to have a look at it themselves. Puzzled by such attitude we investigated the case. So we learnt that an old folkloric belief says that if a pregnant woman looked at the moon, her baby would have birthmarks. Now just imagine a poor creature whose Mom looked at 16 moons! We can credit ESO for the destruction of this belief in a number of minds.

As a scientific organization, ESO has a role to play towards the public at large (and in Chile, in particular). To spread

the knowledge about some of the mysteries of the Universe is a moral obligation every astronomer should feel (not only to justify his existence!). However, not only astronomers, but also many people working at ESO, are proud of what ESO has built in Chile, of belonging to this Organization, and they like to make our beautiful observatory known.

For that reason, it has been really satisfactory to verify, first in Peñuelas, and then in Ovalle, that the response from the public makes up for the exhausting work such efforts implied. For sure, La Silla is now well known in the IVth region of Chile and – what is maybe more important – a window towards astronomy has been opened to a population eager to understand what it is all about. For a long time, ESO was not known in Chile as it should have been. Things are changing, for the best benefit of the public at large, for the ESO employees, and hence... for Astronomy.

The Youngest Visitors Yet

The call came early in the morning from Mrs. Keller. She was at the European School in Munich, she said, and she would like to hear whether it would be possible to visit ESO with a class. It would be so interesting for the children to learn about astronomy and also to see their parents at work.

Now, some *Messenger* readers may not know that the European School in Munich is one of a dozen "European" schools, established in major European cities, where there are "European" institutions. In the case of Munich, the school there was set up and operates in close collaboration with the European

Patent Office. Children of ESO staff have access for some years under an arrangement with this organization.

It is always a particular pleasure to explain astronomy to young people and with the special relationship between this school and ESO in mind, I had little doubt that such a visit must somehow be arranged, and that a hole in the otherwise rather tight schedule of visits to the ESO Headquarters should be found.

The children had already studied the planets, Mrs. Keller said, and they were very eager to learn more. Perhaps we could show some slides? If it would not



Photograph by H.-H. Heyer

be too much trouble to receive 20 children of age 4–6 from the Kindergarten in the German language section?

A challenge! And why not? If I said no, a future Copernicus might decide to let another science benefit from his/her abilities... So of course I said yes, while wondering how to entertain such a group and what the other ESO staff would say, when some of their youngsters suddenly turned up at their place of work.

The photo, taken on the balcony outside the ESO cafeteria after the tour, shows how nice the children were. Not

only did they know a lot about Mars and Jupiter, they also asked questions which were way beyond what you would expect from persons of that age. It was a real pleasure, especially to watch from a distance when Miguel Albrecht of ESO (whose daughter was in the group) showed a beautiful galaxy on the computer screen of MIDAS and to hear the gasps when he made it change colours.

After a sandwich lunch, the visit finished with a look through a small telescope at the cars in a distant car park. Patiently waiting for their turn to ap-

proach the instrument, and extensively discussing what they saw, I understood that the visit had paid off. Not only was it obviously fun; I am sure that the children came away with a good impression.

Two days later, the telephone rang and a teacher from the Munich European School called to ask if a Spanish-speaking class could perhaps visit ESO... But this time I answered truthfully that the visit calendar is booked out long in advance and we are rather few at ESO – maybe we could discuss such a visit in a couple of months' time?

R. WEST, ESO

A Most Impressive Astronomy Exhibition

Next time you come to Munich, don't miss the opportunity to visit an outstanding new astronomy exhibition!

In early May 1992, the world's largest technical museum, the Deutsches Museum which is located in the middle of Munich on an island in river Isar, inaugurated what is most probably the largest and most comprehensive astronomy exhibition in the world, and in any case the most up-to-date.

After more than five years of planning, involving a large team of museum specialists and scientists, the new, 1000 m² exhibition opened its doors to the public and was quickly and completely overrun by interested visitors. This event was accompanied by a "Sci-

ence Press Conference" on May 6, featuring 12 brief talks by well-known scientists and covering the grand lines of virtually all of modern astronomy. It was attended by about 200 media representatives from Germany and several other European countries and was widely reported in the media.

The exhibition was conceived and realized by a team headed by Dr. Jürgen Teichmann of Deutsches Museum and supported by scientists from many research institutes in Germany, including ESO. The former Director of the Max-Planck-Institute for Astrophysics in Garching, Professor Rudolf Kippenhahn, played a decisive, coordinating role.

The basic idea has been to show what modern astronomy really is and how it is done, while also demonstrating the long development that has transformed the oldest of sciences into one of the most modern and exciting ones. The Deutsches Museum is in a unique position to do so, thanks to its very extensive collections of historically important instruments. In this context, ESO was very pleased to make available its 1-metre active optics mirror and support system with which this revolutionary optical invention was first demonstrated. Only a few years old, this equipment is now on display in the same area as the earliest astronomical telescopes, representing yet another decisive step forward in as-