



Comet Schuster on March 6, 1976, 40 min. exposure with ESO 1 m Schmidt telescope.



Comet West on March 4, 1976, 10 min. exposure by C. Pallard (CERN) and B. Pillet (ESO) from Col de la Faucille, near Geneva.

record, 1,030 million kilometres. The perihelion passage took place already in January 1975, but no plates appear to have been taken early 1975 in the corresponding direction.

With its large distance (on June 1, 1976, Comet Schuster is 1,138 million kilometres from the Earth, almost as far as the planet Saturn), this comet will never become a bright object. However, its present apparent magnitude (16–17) indicates that it is indeed a very large comet. It is a most interesting object and will certainly be observed with large telescopes during the coming years.

Contrary to comets close to the Sun, the icy nucleus of Comet Schuster may be observed directly without interference of surrounding gases (the coma), and its albedo (ability to reflect light) may be determined. This in turn gives important information on the constitution of the cometary nucleus, which is believed to be a small piece of material left over at the formation of the Solar System.

Comet West (1975n)

Proving once more that predictions about the brightness of comets are difficult if not impossible, this comet (cf. the "Messenger" No. 4, March 1976, page 8) reappeared on the eastern morning sky in early March, almost 2 magnitudes brighter than foreseen. It thus became one of the brightest in the 20th century and was observed intensively by amateur and professional astronomers alike. Some results have already been published in the IAU Circulars. Of special importance were the discovery of CO^+ in the coma during extreme ultraviolet observations from a NASA rocket and the measurement of two OH emission lines at 1665 and 1667 MHz with the NRAO 91 m radio telescope. The head of the comet broke into four pieces at the time of perihelion passage, probably due to internal stresses from the intense heating by the Sun. The four nuclei slowly disperse under continued observation by those astronomers who hope that the relative motion may give clues to the comet's mass, a quantity largely unknown for comets.

Comet West now recedes quickly from the Sun and, due to perturbations from the major planets, it will only return in about one million years from now.

The ESO Guesthouse

Imagine that you sit twenty or more hours in a narrow seat in the cabin of a plane, packed to the limit with passengers, their bags, boxes and any other conceivable kind of container for "hand"-luggage; imagine that you finally, after those long hours, step out in a foreign city, a foreign country, on another continent, even another hemisphere. Or imagine that you are on your way back to Europe after several, possibly many weeks of hard observing on La Silla, that place where even hard-boiled observers finally start mumbling secret prayers for just one, oh just one night with enough clouds to . . .

The pioneers of ESO could very well imagine this. And they also knew the remedy: a quiet place in Santiago de Chile, where tired astronomers could regain their forces before and after their observing runs. They found the ideal place, a fairly large private house on Calle

Gustavo Adolfo 4634, in the residential area Vitacura. In 1965, the house was bought at a very reasonable price and it has ever since been known as the ESO Guesthouse or the "Casa de Huéspedes".

In the four years from 1965 to December 1968, the house accommodated the administrative office of ESO in Santiago, before the Vitacura Headquarters was ready.

Almost all European astronomers who have observed on La Silla have also spent at least some days in the Guesthouse. During periods of peak load, it has been necessary to lodge astronomers and other visitors in hotels, but a recent transformation has now brought the capacity up to twelve simultaneous guests. This should hopefully take into account the expected increase in the astronomer influx, when the ESO 3.6 m and the Danish 1.5 m telescopes come into operation.

Mrs. Hilde Fritsch, who lives at the Guesthouse, takes care of the daily management. A long-time resident of Santiago, she joined ESO in her present function already in 1969, and innumerable are those astronomers and other visitors who have profited from her friendly help and expert advice. Her guidance to those first-time visitors to Santiago who "just want to buy something typical for their wives, etc." is legendary—and how many would have visited profitably Santiago's famous "Mercado Persa" without her help?

For those ESO employees who bring their family to Chile, the ESO Guesthouse has been a very useful initial station in Chile. No doubt, many wives have learned here some of the subtle differences between European and Chilean housekeeping!

Three Chilean staff and one outside help are employed in the ESO Guesthouse. The garden is extremely well kept and so is the house. Some people, in distant Europe or passing quickly through Santiago, have expressed the view that keeping the ESO Guesthouse is not necessary. But very few astronomers, if any, who have returned from the desert surroundings on La Silla to the lush greenery of the ESO Guesthouse will agree hereto.



The ESO Guesthouse

ESO BOOKLET. A 16-page, two-colour booklet on ESO is now available from the ESO Administration in Hamburg. It has been compiled by Mr. E. Shaw, Geneva, editor of "Europhysics News".

The booklet gives brief background information about ESO and its history, the La Silla Observatory, the ESO Scientific-Technical Centre in Europe and, not the least, the astronomical research carried out at ESO.

The ESO booklet will be sent to those who already receive the "MESSENGER". Further copies are available on request.

Please note the change of address from July 1st, 1976 (cf. p. 4).

STAFF MOVEMENTS

Since the last issue of the "Messenger", the following staff movements have taken place:

ARRIVALS

Hamburg

Calixte Stefanini, French, head of personnel

Geneva

Leon Lucy, British, astronomer (paid associate)

Jacqueline Bergeron, French, astronomer (paid associate)

Gonzalo Alcalno, Chilean, astronomer (student)

Chile

Erik de Brey, Dutch, administrative officer

DEPARTURES

Hamburg

Jean-Claude Carreau, French, head of personnel

Geneva

John Danziger, Australian, senior astronomer

Christophe Faraut, French, systems programmer

Dominique Liège, French, clerk-typist

Chile

Louis Campusano, Chilean, student

Jean Pallsson, French, administrative clerk

ALGUNOS RESUMENES

Seminario sobre estudios ópticos de las fuentes de rayos X

Con fecha 28-30 de abril de 1976, el primero de una serie de seminarios se ha llevado a cabo en Ginebra en el Centro Científico-Técnico de ESO.

El propósito de estos seminarios es analizar el presente estado de conocimientos, comparar métodos y resultados, y en particular coordinar planes futuros.

El primer seminario se refirió a las observaciones ópticas de las fuentes compactas de rayos X. Hay por lo menos una docena de grupos trabajando en este campo en Europa y estos usan una inmensa variedad de técnicas.

Al seminario asistieron unos treinta científicos especialmente invitados de todos los países de ESO, como también de Inglaterra, Italia y los Estados Unidos.

El sistema de control del telescopio de 3,6 m parte a La Silla

El 2 de mayo de 1976, el sistema de control del telescopio de 3,6 m partió de Ginebra hacia La Silla. Este sistema ha sido desarrollado por el Grupo de Control de la División TP e incorpora varias innovaciones, algunas de las cuales han sido implementadas también en otros sistemas de control de ESO.