only way to observe comets in the Oort Cloud. Sekiguchi and Stansberry discussed the observations that will be possible with ASTE (the Japanese counterpart to APEX) and SIRTF (resp.). Jewitt presented a very ambitious project, Pan-STARRS, that will be installed on Mauna Kea and scan the whole sky on a weekly basis. This programme, originally targeted at Near Earth Objects, will discover and follow up all TNOs down to mag 24.

Having 70 astronomers in Antofagasta, a trip to the VLT was a must. Bus-loads invaded Paranal on the Saturday following the conference. Finally, on Sunday, 25 brave adventurers went into the deep Atacama Desert, lead by L. Barrera from UCN, in order to inspect the Monturaqui meteoritic crater. This 300-m diameter crater is located South of the large Salar de Atacama, a 6 hours drive from Antofagasta.

Amazingly, none of the participants was lost on the way, which goes against the legend that astronomers cannot be disciplined when needed.

In 1998, a conference on the same topic was held at ESO/Garching. At that meeting, we were confident that we were on the way to understanding the TNO formation, evolution, composition, etc, with the enthusiasm of a field that was only a few years old. The broad lines were traced, the general picture was in place. The feeling left by this new conference is that we have now enough information to reveal the weaknesses of this general picture, and that even some fundamental questions are still unanswered, such as the reason (or the reality) of a sharp edge terminating the EKB at 45 AU, or the nature of the processes leading to the observed colour distribution.

Finally, during the final discussion session, it was unanimously decided that the branch of science devoted to the study of the TNOs, also designated as Edgeworth-Kuiper belt Object, will be known as EKOlogy.

Fellows at ESO

Stefano Ettori

In October 2001, I started my fellowship in ESO, after 6 years spent at IoA in Cambridge (England) doing my PhD and first Post-Doc in the X-ray Group headed by Andrew Fabian. My area of research is clusters and superclusters of galaxies, with particular interest on the cosmological implications of their observed properties. To study these objects that are the largest virialized structures in the Universe, I look in the optical (with VLT) and X-ray (through XMM and Chandra) wavebands. These observations allow me to determine densities and temperatures of the hot plasma collapsed in the dark matter halo and to recover the cluster baryonic and gravitational masses. With my collaborators here at ESO, I do this at different redshifts from moderate z = 0.3, where the X-ray masses can be directly compared to those obtained from weak lensing analyses, up to 1.2 where few clusters are known through X-ray detection. Of these systems, I have recently used their baryonic mass fraction as cosmological tool to put stringent constraints on the energy constituents of the cosmos.

My duties at ESO are to support the release to the community of the ground based data of the Chandra Deep Field South as part of the Great Observatories Origin Deep Survey (GOODS) project, to represent the Fellows and Students in the Computer Co-ordination Group in Garching and to maintain X-ray software for the few of us that are interested in it.

I am really enjoying my time here: ESO is a perfect place to work both in terms of hard/software assistance and of motivations, it promotes the interaction with other researchers with several lunch/tea talks, informal discussions and crowded offices (sic!) and is big enough to find anytime the right person to discuss with. For my family and myself, it was a debated question whether to accept this fellowship, but now, and also considering the difficulties in changing social life in a country with such a strange language (still originating from Ur-germanic but nothing to do with English...), we think we made the right choice.

Lisa Germany

Having arrived at ESO Chile in September 2000, I truly feel like one of the veterans of La Silla now. There has been an almost complete turnover of support astronomers since I arrived, and I have met many of the visiting astronomers on several previous occasions! But this is part of the great thing about working at La Silla - you get to talk to astronomers from all over the world, learn about different areas of astronomy and instrumentation, build collaborations, and make new friends.

I came here straight from my PhD, which I completed at Mount Stromlo Observatory in Canberra, Australia. I was the 3rd person from Stromlo working here at ESO Chile in 2000/2001, and all three of us actually lived in the same house while we were students! I'm one of these Supernova people who, along with the Gamma Ray Burst people, are the bane of visiting astronomers (all those Targets of Opportunity stealing valuable telescope time). My biggest claim to fame during my PhD is my contribution to the discussion about whether Supernovae and Gamma Ray Bursts are connected.

I am currently investigating the fields around apparently "hostless" supernovae (i.e. supernovae which did not appear to have a host galaxy) to look for faint hosts and, if they exist, investigate their properties. So far, all the supernovae do appear to have hosts, and in one case, we can still see the supernova itself three years after the event! For a supernova to be visible after such a long time is highly unusual, and makes this particular supernova a very interesting object to study – stay tuned for more on that one!

My other main interest is public outreach and taking science to the people. Before starting my PhD I completed a Graduate Diploma in Scientific Communication and have always wanted to pursue this further. To my great joy, ESO is developing an exhibition to go into the science centre here in Santiago, and I am very happy to be part of the team of people working on that.

Linda Schmidtobreick

When I performed my first observations in La Silla in February 1997, I immediately fell in love with the place and decided I wanted to work here someday. In September 2001 after finishing my PhD, working for a year at MPIA Heidelberg, and spending two years as a Postdoc in Padova, I indeed started as an ESO Fellow – with

duty station La Silla, of course. Although the place has sadly changed due to the closing of the smaller telescopes, I still like the work here very much. The team spirit is exceptional, the exchange with the visiting astronomers is very rewarding, and I like the practical and technical work of telescope and instrument maintenance as counterbalance to pure thinking and science.

For the scientific work I find plenty of time when off-duty. I have always been widely interested and hence touched several astronomic topics like interplanetary dust, comets, various types of individual stars, structure of the Milky Way, star formation, and some external galaxies.

More recently, I have focused on the study of the Galactic disc via stellar population analysis, and on Cataclysmic Variables, where I am mainly interested in the accretion process and the outburst mechanisms of the various subclasses. Together with collaborators in Chile and all around Europe, we recently recovered the old nova V840 Oph, which shows an enormously high Carbon content, we followed the dust production during novae outbursts in the sub-mm, and while studying the accretion disc of RR Pic, discovered evidence for a so far unique asymmetric wind.

Since I have originally studied to become a teacher (Maths, Physics, and Philosophy) the educational work is something I miss at ESO. However, I try to propagate science in public talks and articles, I am working in the Museo Interactivo Mirador (Santiago) project (public astronomy exhibition and workshops) and will hopefully manage to give some lectures at Chilean Universities in the near future.

During my free time, I try to express myself in music and painting, I enjoy the great life in Santiago, especially in Ñuñoa or Providencia, the part where I live, and you will always find me with a book close by.

Manuela Zoccali

I have been a Fellow at ESO Garching since September 2000. My three years at ESO are about to end, and in September I will start my second postdoc, the Andes Fellowship, at Universidad Catolica in Santiago (Chile) and Princeton University (USA). Before coming to ESO I was in Padova, where I obtained my PhD.

For my thesis I worked on an HST survey of Galactic Globular Clusters cores, looking for rare populations such as blue stragglers and extreme horizontal branch stars, meanwhile testing stellar evolution models. I also worked on the determination of the Initial Mass Function, and in the problem of absolute and relative GC ages obviously connected with the measure of distances. More recently I moved towards the study of the Galactic bulge, where I determined the stellar Initial Mass Function down to 0.15 solar masses: a power-law with an exponent significantly flatter than Salpeter. With extensive near-IR and optical photometry I recently set new constraints on both the age and metallicity distribution of the bulge.

Working at ESO also gave me the privilege to work for a new instrument: the VLT fibre spectrograph FLAMES. Joining the FLAMES team and sharing the excitement for its success has been fun. It also motivated me to move into high resolution spectroscopy, which, I believe, is going to represent the key tool for our understanding of resolved stellar populations.

In my little spare time I like to play guitar, and dream about living by the sea: swimming, scuba-diving, sailing and windsurfing, all the hobbies that I've been neglecting too much in the last years.

High Honour to Ray Wilson

RICHARD WEST, ESO

During a ceremony at the ESO Headquarters in Garching in the afternoon of 28 February 2003, the Order of the French Legion of Honour was bestowed upon Dr. Raymond N. Wilson, ESO staff member from 1972-1993.

The decoration was made by Professor Charles Fehrenbach, member of the French Académie des Sciences and Honorary Director of the Observatoire de Haute-Provence.

On behalf of the French government, the Acting French Consul in Munich, Mrs Annie Mari, presented Dr. Wilson with the official scroll. Other speeches were given by Dr. Catherine Cesarsky and Professor Lodewijk Woltjer, present and former Director General of ESO. Many of Ray Wilson's friends and colleagues from the optical and astronomical communities in France and at ESO also witnessed the ceremony.

From left to right: Prof. L. Woltjer, Dr. C. Cesarsky, Dr. R. Wilson, Mrs. A. Mari and Prof. Fehrenbach.

In his presentation, Professor Fehrenbach emphasised the enormous impact of the Active Optics concept on current astronomy and astrophysics – a fundamental invention made by Ray Wilson and his team at ESO in the 1980's and first implemented with great success in the 3.5-m ESO New Technology Telescope. This concept paved the way towards larger telescope mirrors, effectively overcoming century-old size and weight limitations. Most of the world's giant telescopes including ESO's own unique Very Large Telescope are based on this revolutionary concept.

Expressing words of thanks, Ray Wilson explained how this innovation was the most visible result of a long, productive and inspiring collaboration with many colleagues, especially in the ESO Optics Group. It was a great reward for him to witness the unequalled success of the VLT and to sense the daring visions for new and powerful facilities now taking shape within ESO and elsewhere in the world. An article by Ray Wilson on these developments will appear in the September issue of *The Messenger*.

Dr. Wilson (left) receives his honour from Prof. Fehrenbach.