

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 be-

come 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 Nuñoa 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.

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, es-



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



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

pecially 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*.