

In Memoriam Bengt Westerlund

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Bengt Westerlund, who died on 4 June, 2008 began his astronomical career in Sweden where he was born in 1921. He received his PhD in astronomy from the University of Uppsala in 1954 and spent most of the subsequent years, until 1967, at Mt. Stromlo Observatory, Australia, where he was first the Uppsala Schmidt Observer and an Honorary Fellow at the Australian National University (ANU), then becoming in 1958 Reader in Astronomy at the ANU. In 1967 he took a position as Professor of Astronomy at Steward Observatory where Bart J. Bok had become director. In 1969 he was appointed Director of ESO in Chile, which position he held until 1975 when he returned to Sweden to take up the position of the Professor of Astronomy at Uppsala Observatory, retiring in 1987.

His career was devoted to observational astronomy and his work on the structure of the Milky Way and the Magellanic Clouds earned respect and appreciation amongst his colleagues. Within those broad categories he contributed significantly to studies of clusters, stellar pop-



Bengt Westerlund, pictured second from left, at a *despedida* (farewell party) at the Pelicano Camp in May 1970.

ulations, carbon stars, planetary nebulae, WR stars, diffuse interstellar bands, luminous stars, stellar classification, and supernova remnants. Beyond these he also published papers on dwarf spheroidals, emission-line galaxies and radio galaxies. In this work, at Mt. Stromlo, Steward Observatory and at ESO in Chile, he was always successful in engaging the interest and participation of students, a number of whom produced high-quality theses under his supervision. Also Bengt was always a keen organiser and participant in international meetings.

The years in Chile were not always easy because of the political turmoil culminating in the violent military coup in 1973. Bengt Westerlund handled these matters in his usual quiet diplomatic manner, so that the life and functioning of ESO Chile

was scarcely affected by the surrounding events. The growth of ESO Chile during his time also created additional managerial responsibilities which Bengt handled in his customary calm manner. After his departure from ESO he served for eight years on the OPC, four years of which were as chairman of that important committee.

In whatever ambience Bengt Westerlund worked, he was known for his unflinching courtesy, gentleness, consideration and generosity. People at all levels in ESO and elsewhere remember and still appreciate these characteristics. He was not only sociable but above all a gentleman's gentleman. Bengt Westerlund is survived by his wife Vivi, a constant companion, and his two children Carl Gunnar and Gunilla Margareta.

Do you know your Solar System? Children in Garching do!

Florian Kerber, Reinhard Hanuschik,
Harald Kuntschner
ESO

Complaints about real and perceived shortcomings of the educational system are commonplace. There is also no shortage of well-intentioned suggestions

and ideas from all parties involved. But what about some hands-on action? What do you do if you want to try out something new now? The Grundschule Ost (East Junior School) in Garching felt they wanted to dip their toes into astronomy for their project days this year. They decided to contact an expert resource near-

by and do this jointly with ESO. Or as the school's choir put it:

*“Wie kann man über den Weltraum was lernen?
Danke, danke, das sagen wir heut’!
Zum Glück gibt’s die ESO und die hilft uns dabei gerne!
Danke, danke, das sagen wir heut’!”*