

prospective activities, a role fairly similar in this respect to the one played within the European Space Agency by the Astronomy Working Group. Important decisions, such as to implement two new telescopes (3.5 m NTT and 2.2 m) at La Silla, or to house the European Coordinating Facility of the Space Telescope, were taken by the Council. Given the growing complexity of astronomy with respect to instruments as well as to telescopes, the STC should relay the wishes, needs and various competences of the European community: e.g. for the NTT project, the main options such as telescope design, focal plane configuration, mode of operation, instrumentation, optimization with respect to the 3.6 m use are currently discussed.

Another task of the STC is to follow the progress of ESO built-in instrumentation. Given the long lead-time of such projects—even worse in the past two years due to the move to Garching—the work here is very prospective indeed, and is usually substantiated by workshops. To propose such meetings at European scale, in close cooperation with the ESO staff, is an initiative often taken by STC members who, here also, may channel wishes and needs of the community (a few examples in the past years: Abundance Determination for Stars, Two-Dimensional Photometry, Infrared Astronomy . . .). Among instruments, let us mention the new IRSPEC cryogenic spectrograph born at the first ESO infrared workshop held in Utö (Sweden) in 1978. It will only be in one or two years that the STC will be able to resume a new development phase, once the current set of instruments under construction is completed. The purchase of expensive items, such as array detectors, computers . . . is also being discussed by the STC who has to approve it. Another prospective and important subject in the past two

years has been the preliminary study for the Very Large Telescope (VLT): the matter is important as it is clearly illustrated by the successive conferences (Geneva 1976, Tucson 1980, Garching 1981, Tucson 1982) being held and by the very broad range of options under discussion. It is clear that ESO, with the backing of almost the whole Europe, can play there a significant role. Apart from the full support given by the STC to the Garching Conference, the matter is discussed regularly: Among other crucial issues which will need a continuing debate, is the spatial interferometry and coherence capability of such a large venture. Given the growing costs of astronomical projects, the variety of options (visible, IR, radio, space), it becomes difficult to make sound choices in a context of economic difficulties. The STC should be the right place to reflect the will and opinions of European astronomers.

Apart from STC members' personal experience, the day-to-day life of ESO, especially at La Silla, is less reflected in the STC concerns, leaving this heavy responsibility to the Director-General advised by the Users Committee and the Observing Programmes Committee. The situation might be different if some STC meetings could occur at La Silla or if the director at La Silla could attend STC meetings, a less expensive proposal I made at the last Council meeting.

As emphasized in this brief report, I believe that the STC is already and should be in the future a place of confrontation of ideas and options, even if they appear sometimes as very unorthodox, as the debate on whether ESO should build a mm radio telescope at La Silla, use concrete spherical mounts for the NTT or operate telescopes in Chile in a completely remote manner.

## Social Activity in the Outer Atmosphere of La Silla

*Sonia Rodríguez-Larraín, ESO, La Silla*

Who would believe that there exists another form of life—a social life—in this dark nebula of El Norte Chico? One would immediately assume that in an environment where noise, lights, wine and other types of pollution have been banned deliberately, the swinging species could not evolve in their party-going and mirth. That the sole survivors could only be those vague, unworldly non-drinkers, whose only concern is to generate work and publish it.

And yet . . . wrong. The will to enjoy life's more mundane side is not in quiescence for all in this Observatory. The fittest have managed to survive.

The first sign that not all is as prosaic as one would tend to believe in these austere surroundings is the pass-word: "the Bar is open". Certainly those words are not lacking in poetic beauty. Surely that is what is meant by "preparing for the night ahead".

The Bar is a tradition that has survived despite the fact that it is frequented by very few steadies and plenty of new-comers. Any reason is good enough to open the Bar: going on home-leave, getting a new contract, getting a new hair-cut . . .

And while on the subject of traditions and new-comers, it is a Chilean custom that within a month's time of being hired, the new employee has to *pagar el piso* and invite his new colleagues to show what a great pal he is going to turn out to be. These social gatherings normally take place at the beginning of a *turno* since provisions start running low as the days go by. Good music, great dancers, plenty of provisions. It's all there, except for the fact that La Silla is rather short on girls. Let's admit it, there are only half a dozen and all are not always on the

mountain at the same time. Yet if you look at it from another angle, this handicap has its advantages. No girl can possibly feel she is left out, or that she is not popular enough. She is absolutely guaranteed, at every party, that she will not miss a single dance. Not a chance. Whether she wants it that way or not. "Wall-flowers" are unheard of on La Silla.

The only time there are plenty of girls on the mountain is when a school for young ladies from Coquimbo announces a cultural (?) visit. Suddenly there are as many volunteers for guides as there are visitors, not counting the mother superior.



"Si vas para Chile" . . .

If at tea-time too much joking and giggling are heard from one table it can only mean that the guide has digressed from the passionate topic of astronomy and has launched into more personal matters with the young ladies. *Un amigo* will usually bring him back to inner space by telling him in a loud voice: "Your wife just phoned, she will be at your mother-in-law's with the children this afternoon." The room is filled with disappointed groans and giggles reach maximum peak. "Oh Death, where is thy sting?"

Incidentally, there is a Drama Group on the mountain and they are most enthusiastic about their personal production of "*Il Barbiere di La Silla*". The actors, all extremely talented buffoons, adapt their lines with very local terminology as they go along, sometimes producing such hysterical situations that rehearsals have to be stopped until everyone pulls himself together again. At this pace, opening night will not probably be before Christmas 198? but, then, there is no real hurry.

With all this conviviality, and the starry nights and the moon shining so bright, romance is bound to put in an appearance from time to time, and so it does. Several couples have met while working on the mountain and actually owe their married bliss to La Silla. The first marriages date as far back as when they were dynamiting the site to construct the 3.6-m. In this romantic setting, a young and dashing Dutch constructor fell passionately in love with a delicate desert flower who'd come to work on the standard materials catalogue. They were married almost instantly. Soon afterwards a galant French mechanics technician from St.-Chamond declared his love to a pretty, young secretary and was immediately accepted; they were also promptly married and off they moved to Istanbul.

In fact, since the times of site-hunting, twelve unpremeditated internationals, whose only motive for coming to Chile was a contract with ESO, have already walked down the aisle with their Chilean brides or are on the verge of signing this more permanent type of contract. Some have not made it yet, but they don't lose hope. Evidently, the forces of the stars do cast a tantalizing spell over the more assailable benedicks from abroad.

But even for those who are always in a mental fog when it comes to romancing, La Silla is a great place to meet people and make friends, particularly so for the more shy types who have a hard time communicating with others. At meal times people are just bound to meet and talk. For the super-shy who wish to be around people but avoid the talking, we recommend the jogging team. This team is a silent group who rush about the Observatory at hypersonic speed in the early hours, while the more sedentary are just getting into, or out of, bed.

All Departments on La Silla have their Baby-Football teams to be proud of. Each team plays with five mighty "cracks" who look very professional in their spotless uniforms out on the concrete field. All the teams have their fans and cheer-leaders, so considerable thought goes into choosing the appropriate names that will symbolize them with vehemence. Hence, we have the "Come Fierros" (Lead-Chewers) from the Astroworkshop; the "Super H.P.". (Super Horse-Power) from Construction and Maintenance; the "Troncales" (old tree trunks too

## Tentative Time-table of Council Sessions and Committee Meetings in 1982

May 4	Users Committee
May 5	Scientific and Technical Committee
May 6-7	Finance Committee
May 7	Committee of Council
May 24-25	Observing Programmes Committee
May 26	Council
November 9	Scientific and Technical Committee
Nov. 10-11	Finance Committee
November 12	Committee of Council
Nov. 30-Dec. 1	Observing Programmes Committee
December 2-3	Council

heavy to move) from the Warehouse and Maintenance, the "OVNIs" (UFOs) from Administration; the "P.P.Q.P." from Electronics (better not translate this one); the "Condores" from the Hotel and Kitchen Staff and "Astronomia" from Astronomy.

The first team was founded 15 years ago and since then the football season has been the main recreative event on La Silla. Unfortunately for want of a well-lit indoor gym, the season is very short. Games are only played after work and they rely on day-light only. The first game is played on October 1st when daylight is prolonged by one hour. Each team works hard to enter the championship, win it and take possession of the cup that is awarded. This much coveted trophy is usually donated by a prominent staff member or an ESO supplier; such is the case of the famous "Dr. Muller Cup", which had to be won three consecutive times before the winning team could keep it. The *Club Deportivo* is the public relations manager and makes sure the press know all about the tournament events. T.V. La Serena has been at La Silla for the closing games of two seasons now.

The Volley-Ball team was recently born at a pic-nic in El Beño water hole. This is La Silla's own "national park" just 15 minutes drive on the road to Pelicano. The occasion was due to many Garching visitors being on the site and this, naturally, called for some special celebration. So written invitations were issued and, after work, the Sunday cold-buffet dinner was transferred to El Beño. The Volley-Ball net was set up and the game was well on its way even before everyone had arrived. Others, less sports-oriented, attached a cassette player to the battery of a car and there was music for those who wanted to dance amid the stones and lizards. The general comment afterwards was unanimous: We should have picnics more often.

Still, there are times when not everybody can leave the mountain, so at Christmas and New Year the families of those on duty are invited to come and spend the holidays on La Silla. Meal-times are full of childish chatter—which is a welcome change from the scientific chatter normally going on—the consumption of ice-cream really soars up and, for two days, the soft-drink machine works non-stop. It is said that everyone should enter the New Year in a happy state, so the no-alcohol ("ley-seca") restriction is un-officially countermanded that evening; and as long as there is no more car driving once the party goes into proper motion, ESO will, obligingly, turn all eyes to the telescopes.

So we find that the efforts to sustain a social life in these adverse conditions are not completely futile. Apparently, the fittest could thrive in a black hole given a chance. It is only on those weekends—which seem to drag on forever—when the morale is at its lowest ebb, that the fittest begin to explore their capacities for endurance and ask themselves: "Why do I feel like going down today?"

## New Telephone Numbers for ESO-Chile

Please note that the telephone numbers for ESO in Chile have changed. The new numbers are:

La Silla Observatory: Santiago 88757  
 La Serena 213832  
 Office Santiago: 2285006  
 Office La Serena: 212882