The Dedication

Some 160 visitors, many from thousands of miles away, made the trek up Mauna Kea for the dedication ceremony on 28 September, 1979. It was a typical beautiful Hawaiian day as the caravan of close to 40 four-wheel drive vehicles moved slowly up the dusty and winding road to the top, passing through the lunar-like landscape of the mountain slopes.

Inside the observatory, the elegant apparatus awaiting the visitors resembled something "out of a James Bond movie" as Governor Ariyoshi put it. But the staging that day was strictly Hawaiian. The massive, gleaming new telescope was attached to the mezzanine deck by long strands of vanda orchids intertwined with maile leaves and dozens of colorful anthuriums blazed at its foot: the sound of conch shell trumpeted over the intercom system. The dome was open to the rarefied air and the flags of Canada, France, Hawaii, and the United States fluttered now and then.

The untying of the three lei strands capped the dedication ceremony which included the playing of the national anthems, official speeches by Professor Charles Fehrenbach, chairman of the CFHT Board, Roch LaSalle, Canada's minister of Supplies and Services, Pierre Aigrain, France's minister of Research, and Hawaii's Governor George Ariyoshi, and a benediction by a Hawaiian priest.

Later at a prime rib and French wine luncheon in Waimea, dignitaries toasted the project and Nobel Laureate Dr. Gerhard Herzberg praised the new site and the "endeavors of those that try to understand the universe and the nature and role of man in it".

Progress on the Telescope

The first trials on the sky in August and September were very successful but several problems had to be fixed before resuming observations efficiently. The main problem concerned the prime focus cage which proved uncomfortable for the observer and unreliable because of poor or temporary cabling.

The prime focus cage has since been brought down to the observing floor and work on the internal arrangement and recabling is in progress.

Meanwhile the Cassegrain upper end with a dummy mirror has been placed on the telescope tube so that control system tests can proceed with the telescope in balance.

Several other problems will also have to be solved before the telescope can be used by the first visiting astronomers in March 1980. They are in the following areas:

- The α and δ brakes have been judged to be too weak. New brakes will have to be installed in both alpha and delta.

- The tube is too light at the bottom by about two tons. Dead weights have been placed at the bottom in a temporary manner. The permanent solution consists in placing lead weights inside the cell structure.

- The mirror cell is not yet perfectly adjusted.