

31st Fighter Wing: The U.S. Air Force's fighter wing south of the Alps.

THE VIGILEER

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Aviano Air Base, Italy

Fly Bys

Air Force Ball

The 31st Fighter Wing hosts the 57th Annual Air Force Ball 7:30 p.m. Sept. 17 at the La Bella Vista Club. This year's event will include city-themed rooms with regional cuisine, beverages and music. Tickets cost \$18 to \$20 for E-7 and above, \$13 to \$15 for E-6 and below. Tickets can be purchased from group executives.

Holiday greetings

People can sign up now to record their hometown holiday greetings by calling Ext. 4577. The greetings team will be here 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 at the Aviano Base Exchange. Walk-ins are accepted.

Jewish holiday

The Aviano Chapel celebrates Rosh Hashanah 8 to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday and 10 a.m. to noon and 8 to 9:30 p.m. Thursday. Call Ext. 5211 for more information.

Commander call tapes

The 31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs office has Air Force Television News tapes available for commander's calls. New tapes are received every other week. For more information, call Ext. 7555.

Wing revises RESCON program

By Staff Sgt.
Julie Weckerlein
31st Fighter Wing
Public Affairs
Vigileer editor

The 31st Fighter Wing's Responsibility Condition Program was recently revamped by wing leaders here.

Brig. Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, 31st FW commander, spearheaded the revision to the program's policy, which he said "fosters a culture that won't tolerate drunk drivers."

"The real answer is that there isn't one solution [to the problem of drunk driving], but rather a series of actions we can take and keep taking to educate our team and mitigate the consequences of drunk driving," he said in the policy letter.

The RESCON program was implemented in 2003 to combat the trend of drunk driving incidents and motor vehicle accidents here. Previously, depending on the number of incidents in a 31-day period, the wing was placed under four RESCON levels: Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta. Each level showed



File photo by Senior Airman Lakisha Croley

Aviano drivers can expect more Selective Traffic Enforcement Program checkpoints whenever the 31st Fighter Wing Responsibility Condition increases. Checkpoints can include random vehicle inspections (shown above), speed checks and patrols.

an increase of vehicle checkpoints, safety briefings and restrictions prohibiting business at local establishments whose primary business is serving alcohol.

"Our changes have been: one -- to split out the motor vehicle accident portion of the program and two -- to change the program to hold the individual more personally responsible for a DUI," said General Breedlove.

Master Sgt. Jason Beaty, 31st

Fighter Wing Ground Safety Office, said one problem with the original RESCON policy was that people associated it too much with the DUI-problem.

"It was discouraging because the number of motor vehicle accidents kept pushing us into RESCON Delta, even though our DUI numbers were down," he said.

A tiger team was established

See TRAINING, Page 7

Drive carefully, especially during inclement weather and when driving at night. Most mishaps can be avoided by reducing speed.



New location

The Aviano Thrift Shop moved to a new location in Area One-one that promises more space, more merchandise and more proceeds to give back to the community.

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Nightmare

A decision to drive drunk changed the life of one Aviano Airman, as well as the lives of those around him. Airman Nicholas Branham shares the story of how he survived a nightmare.

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Sports, fitness

The Aviano Dragons softball team defeated a team from England, and elliptical cross-trainers could be your next step to better health. All this and more sports and fitness information inside.

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Air Force Chief's Sight Picture

The Importance of Voting — The Power of Your Vote



Around the world, Airmen make a difference. From the collapse of the Soviet Union and Desert Storm more than a decade ago to our global planning and execution of air and space power today, Airmen have done more than their part for our nation. In the coming months, we need to make a difference in another way. We all need to exercise the privilege only enjoyed by free nations — the privilege of voting.

Most of you deployed in an Air Expeditionary Force since you have been in the Air Force. You saw our way of life compared to others in troubled parts of the world.

While we as Americans are not without our problems and issues, if all the borders of all the nations of the world were open to all people, where do you think most would choose to reside? There is little doubt it would be in the Land of the Free.

There have been many books written in recent years about our founding fathers — the men who wrote the powerful words that forged a new nation. In our Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson penned a phrase that is the cornerstone of our democratic institutions and makes us unique among nations. He wrote, "...Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed." It is this idea of the "Consent of the Governed" that empowers each of us in the form of our vote.

Many of us experienced some obstacles to voting while serving in the armed forces. The absentee voting system has traditionally been fraught with challenges, but we are working hard to minimize the red tape. With Airmen and their families serving around the globe, many suffer from delays in mail service — another obstacle to registering and voting. Our leadership in the Department of Defense has worked with the U.S. Postal Service to give priority to voting materials in the mail system. To facilitate the voting process, we created a user-friendly voting link called "Airmen Votes" on our Air Force Link Web site for you and your families to use. The "Airmen Votes" icon on the Air Force Link website, www.af.mil, will guide you to all the information you need to register to vote, file an absentee ballot request, and send in an absentee ballot.

In most cases, all you need to do is fill out a postcard and mail it in. Guidance is available for all states and territories and for those living

overseas. Family members who are eligible to vote can use this web link as well, including children away from home while attending school.

The Secretary of the Air Force, Dr. Jim Roche, and I are dedicated to ensuring every eligible Airman has the opportunity to vote. As Airmen we have all taken an oath to support and defend the Constitution that guarantees our right to vote. As a nation we accept divergence of opinion and candidates with different views. I encourage you to avail yourself of the right to vote for candidates and on the issues of your choice. No other single act is so fundamental to our form of Government. Please register. Please vote.

I urge you to exercise your right to vote. If there was any doubt that every vote counts, past presidential elections have proved that it does! Just a few votes can decide the outcome of an election.

As we pave the way for democratic governments in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is only fitting that we provide an example of democracy in action by engaging in the democratic process at home. We protect democracy through our military duty and service to our country, but we also protect democracy when we vote. Democracy only works when people fulfill their obligation to cast their ballot.

This year, Americans will have the opportunity once again to exercise that right by going to the polls to vote for the President and Vice President, members of Congress, as well as thousands of local officials. Even if you are stationed far from your home of record, you can vote through the absentee ballot process. This is true whether you are stationed one state away or deployed to another country.

Historically, Airmen lead the public at large in exercising this fundamental right and duty of citizenship. We'd like to see this trend continue. To this end, voter assistance officers reside within each of your units who are responsible for answering your questions about elections and facilitating the voting process.

We all have an important voice that should be heard and heeded by our government. When we go to the polls, we can express our views through the democratic process. As members of the world's greatest Air Force, we labor so that others may vote; let's make sure we exercise that same right. See you at the polls.



AIR FORCE
Air & Space Power

Aviano Thrift Shop moves to new location

More space means more merchandise and more profit and donations for the community

By Airman Rebecca Maurer
*31st Fighter Wing
 Public Affairs
 Vigileer staff writer*

Tucked away in the corner of Area One, the new Aviano Thrift Shop may be a little harder to find than it used to be, but the customers agree, the search is worth it.

"I like this building a lot better," said Staff Sgt. Bonnie Jonas, a thrift store customer. "There's more room, and they have everything organized into sections so it's easy to find what you want."

The new building is much larger, said Angie Newland, thrift store manager. Unlike the old building, the Area One store has running water, bathrooms, air conditioning and Internet access, as well as extra rooms. The extra space means more items can be displayed for sale.

"It's like the Wal-Mart of Aviano," said Martin Weckerlein, thrift store assistant

manager. "We have everything in here -- furniture, clothes, kitchen wares, electronics, movies, books, toys and electronics and appliances in 110 and 220 volts."

The new thrift store is behind the Aviano Child Development Center, in the old EDIS building. The path is between the pine trees to the right of the CDC, and winds behind the building to the store. Unfortunately, there aren't any signs up yet, but the thrift store managers hope to have them soon.

"It's a little hard to find, but once they have a sign up it'll be a lot easier," said Janet Nielsen, a thrift store volunteer. "It's a great place to shop, so it's worth looking for, though. And it's really good for the community."

The store is open Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

"People can drop off donations and consignments anytime we're open," said Mrs. Newland. "We also need volunteers."



Senior Airman Jessica Switzer

Volunteer Paula Hequenez sorts through the clothing racks Wednesday at the Aviano Thrift Shop's new location in Area One.

It's fun to volunteer at the thrift store, said Mr. Weckerlein. "The shop has a family-friendly feel to it, and volunteers have an impact on the community," he said. Volunteers also get first dibs on stuff and 50 percent off what they buy.

All proceeds from the shop go directly to the community through scholarships and donations.



Annual bazaar opens in October

Aviano shoppers will have access to about 115 vendors from around the world at the Bella Befana Bazaar noon to 10 p.m. Oct. 1, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Oct 2, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 3, in Hangars 1 to 4.

The Bazaar is open to all NATO ID card holders. All sales are in U.S. dollars only. Check cashing will be available, as well as credit card stations for all purchases.

Gift wrapping and postal services will be on site, along with live entertainment and a kids corner.

Various food and drink booths will be set up, sponsored by local organizations. (31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs)

Alcoholics Anonymous meets 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays in Area Bldg. 168, behind the Aviano Child Development Center. Call Ext. 5667.

New program lets organizations "adopt" local roadways

By Senior Airman Jessica Switzer
*31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs
 Vigileer staff writer*

It's only a gum wrapper, but when thrown onto Italian roads, it's much more than that; it's a defacement of natural beauty.

To combat the litter that gets thrown out of car windows every day, several groups from Aviano Air Base started a program to clean up heavily-littered roads.

"Many years ago, there was a similar project, but it fell by the wayside," said Master Sgt. Brian Vilders, 31st Maintenance Squadron. "I figured bringing it back would be a good thing to do."

Encouraged by the litter on the off-limits road between the flightline and Areas One and Two, Sergeant Vilders restarted an "Adopt-a-Highway" type program.

"[The road] looks bad and it's not hard to guess whose throwing out all the trash," he said. "There are not a whole lot of Taco Bells

What's in the bag?

As it turns out, it's not just tires and asphalt on local roads. Here's some of the most common items picked up during a cleanup • bits of paper and receipts • gray, plastic Army, Air Force Exchange Service bags • paper or plastic cups or soda cans • cigarettes and cigarette boxes • personal hygiene products • needles • broken glass • car parts • plastic ties • wrappers

and Burger Kings in Italy and you see all the bags lying on the side of the road."

Sergeant Vilders went to the Aviano Ambiente office in the Aviano Municipal building to work out a framework for the program. The 31st MXS top three organization adopted the stretch of road that starts near the Area Two gate and goes to the train overpass.

"They just asked for a letter explaining what we're doing, how we're doing it, the frequency,

the number of people and things like that," he said. "Once I found the people to talk with, they were tickled pink that I would suggest this."

The Aviano chapter of the Air Force Sergeant's Association also adopted a road in Aviano.

"We had talked about it, just to give back to the community," said Master Sgt. David Poulin, AFSA member. "At a Top Three meeting, Sergeant Vilders said he adopted a highway, so I tapped him on the shoulder and asked him how he did it."

The AFSA adopted the road from Hotel Oliva to the Aviano industrial area. They pick up their stretch of road quarterly while the 31st MXS Top Three walks their's once a month.

"I've been keeping an eye on the road," said Sergeant Vilders. "People are keeping us employed. There are always opportunities to help." Anyone interested in adopting a road or volunteering to help existing groups can call Sergeant Vilders at Ext. 7545 or Sergeant Poulin at Ext. 4480.

Abandoned animals at Aviano

Laws prohibit leaving pets behind

By Senior Airman Jessica Switzer
31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs
Vigileer staff writer

Wherever “companion animals” or “pets” are, their families have a certain responsibility to them. Occasionally, a family won’t take seriously its responsibilities to the four-legged members and animals get abandoned.

“Pet abandonment -- I don’t care if it’s in Italy or in the U.S. -- is unacceptable,” said Army Capt. Eric Lombardini, Aviano Air Base’s veterinarian. “These are animals that are cognizant. They have every ability to feel things, to feel emotions. They are not toys.”

The Italian government agrees. In July, the Italian Senate passed an animal cruelty bill that has those abandoning their pets facing steep fines of up to 10,000 Euros, said Army Staff Sgt. Francesca Ross, Aviano Veterinary Clinic.

Capt. Lombardini said, “A pet becomes a family member entitled to medical care, to love, to attention, to everything we can do to keep that animal happy and healthy.”

Unfortunately, Americans have a bad rep in the area concerning their pets.

“There are two stray facilities in the area,” he said. “Americans are not allowed to bring animals there because there’s a misconception that when Americans PCS they leave their animals behind.”

Not all of the base’s pet owners abandon their animals. There are some who are very

To advertise a pet in the Vigileer, fax the ad to 0434-961-300 or send it to tradeform@risma.it. Ads must be in before 5 p.m. Thursday one week prior to date of desired publication.



attached to their four-legged family members.

“I treat my dogs like children,” said Mrs. Noranne Kocher, an Aviano pet owner. “They were both adopted from animal shelters. Abandoning one of them would be like abandoning a child on the side of the road; it’s deplorable.”

People who can’t keep their pet, for whatever reason, can find a home for their pet with a little planning, said Captain Lombardini. They can advertise in the Vigileer, or work through word of mouth. The vet clinic will even help a family find a new home for their pet. The key is for people not to get a pet as an accessory.

“There’s nothing cuter than a puppy or kitten, but they grow up and become cats and dogs. If you can’t handle that responsibility, then you shouldn’t have it,” he said. “If at the time you got the pet you were able to care for the pet and something changed, there’s any number of things you can do as long as you plan ahead.”

RESCON CORNER

DUIs

Week 0
28 days 0

RESCON Normal

The 31st Fighter Wing remains in RESCON Normal. We’re on our way to another day off, as long as nobody makes the choice to drive drunk.

Under the revised RESCON policy, specific actions are outlined for a DUI offender and his or her squadron. They include:

- The DUI offender and his or her entire chain of command will report to the 31st Fighter Wing vice commander in service dress uniform the day following the incident.

- DUI offenders will have their driving privileges and their alcohol ration cards suspended for one year.

- DUI offenders will update the appropriate signs at base gates on a daily basis. If they are unavailable, their unit is responsible for updating the sign. If the wing goes for more than 31 days without a DUI, the sign of the last squadron to have a DUI will come down. (31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs)

Buckle up! It’s the law.

AvianoDads Playgroup meets 1 to 2:30 p.m. Tuesdays at the Aviano Family Advocacy Center in Area One. Call Ext. 5667 for information.

Sortie Board

	Hours	Sorties
31st FW		
Goal	278.4	195
Ahead or Behind	9.4	-5
510th FS		
Goal	111.2	68
Ahead or Behind	-13.7	-12
555th FS		
Goal	167.2	127
Ahead or Behind	23.1	7



Airman 1st Class Desiree Hayden

Storytime

Aviano Elementary School teacher Laura Janese reads a book to her kindergarten students during the first day of school Tuesday here. The middle and high school also opened its doors to students Tuesday.

TRAINING, from Page 1

to focus on the problem of motor vehicle accidents separately from drunk driving. “The team is going to look at what’s causing so many people to get in accidents and how we can fix that problem,” he said.

The revised policy letter also details five RESCON levels: Normal, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta. Previously, the former policy never clarified RESCON Normal or what it took for the wing to achieve it.

Now, if the wing goes 31 days DUI-free, its considered in RESCON Normal, and members will be given a day off.

“RESCON is about doing - being proactive, preventative and vigilant,” said General Breedlove.

Jumper speaks of decreased manning

By Tech. Sgt. Mona Ferrell
U.S. Air Forces in Europe

A decrease in recruiting rather than forced reductions is the right way to reduce manning, said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper on Aug. 30.

Throughout this process, ensuring America's Airmen know they are appreciated is a No. 1 priority, he said during a visit to Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

"Retention and recruiting for the Air Force throughout this crisis over the last three years has remained superb," the general said. "Even after stop-loss was lifted, people feared that Airmen would be leaving the Air Force in great numbers, especially in the Guard and Reserve; it just didn't happen.

"And so we find ourselves in a position where we have 20,000 people more than we should have by law," he said. "I want to try and deal with it without any forced reductions in the force. I don't want anybody to be forced to leave (who) doesn't want to. The secretary of the Air Force (Dr. James G. Roche) and I are absolutely dedicated to making sure we don't break faith with our Airmen."

To get the manning numbers to where they should be and keep Airmen's faith, recruiting is going to be cut by about one-third for a year, General Jumper said.

"We've never tried this before, but I think it's the right thing to do," he said. "Taking that (recruiting) loss in one year (should help us) get back to the numbers we're supposed to have, and we hope that the excesses in the few previous years will help fill in those holes as far as grade opportunity."

Taking care of people and the Air Force organization as a whole is all about knowing where the critical shortages are and ensuring the right

people have the right skills and are doing the right things, General Jumper said.

"We went for years during the '90s making cuts in people," he said. "We would cut 10 percent, and then 15 percent and then 20 percent — and then we finally ended up cutting a total of 40 percent of our force. In a lot of cases, those slots didn't go away, and people with other skills then migrated into them. You have people with essential skills (who) we need, now filling slots that should have been taken off the books and never were.

"It's a hard thing to do, and it's very traumatic, but (during) the first two years of my tenure, we got the books balanced, and we got the people out of the slots that were supposed to be emptied; we got the right people in the right slots," he said. "Only then did we really know what our critical shortages were."

But this shift in manning does not mean the Air Force is doing more with less, General Jumper said.

"We've got better budgets over the last three years than we've had in many years," he said. "We've got airplane parts, and we've got mission-capable rates in our airplanes higher than what they've been for years. Why? Because we've had money to buy the parts for the first time in years and years.

"We've had pay raises and bonuses that have continued in unprecedented levels that Congress continues to vote for us," he said. "We're not doing more with less; we are doing more with the same amount of people — particularly when you talk about trying to sustain two wars."

It all comes down to proper use of Airmen and letting them know they are valued, the general said.

General Jumper said he wants Airmen to know that "we appreciate their service, and we're going to do everything we can to keep people who want to stay in the service." (Courtesy of U.S. Air Forces in Europe News Service)



The summer season is wrapping up with respectable statistics.

Aviano Air Base is 68 percent lower in total reportable mishaps than last year's 101 Critical Days of Summer.

- In 2003, Aviano experienced five privately owned motor vehicle mishaps with two fatalities. This year, Aviano had two such mishaps and one fatality.

- In 2003, Aviano had nine on-duty, industrial mishaps. This year, there were two.

- There were 19 reportable mishaps last year, while this year, there were only six. (A mishap is reportable any time a member misses eight hours of duty beyond the day of mishap.)

- Although reportable mishaps are down, major vehicle accidents remain a major problem. Drivers are reminded to slow down and drive defensively on the Italian roads. (*31st Fighter Wing Safety Office*)

Cell phones and driving: Italian law prohibits the use of handheld cell phones while driving. Drivers must pull over if they must take the call.

Portable electric fans pose fire risk

Precautions can prevent fire, loss of property

Portable electric fans are a common way to "beat-the-heat" during the summer months.

They are cord-connected appliances that can be easily moved from place to place. Examples include box, window, desk or table, pedestal or floor, and clip-on fans. One thing in common is these fans can be a fire hazard.

According to the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, "portable fans were involved in an estimated 4,500 residential fires in the United States. These fires resulted in about 270 civilian injuries, over 20 deaths, and about \$55 million in property losses from 1990 through 1998."

A common scenario is an overheated fan that ignites near combustibles, such as piles of

paper. This is especially true for fans with plastic components which melt and drip on the objects.

One such incident occurred at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey. A person in billeting left for work, leaving a portable electric fan on full power. The fan was on a small end table with magazines nearby. The fan's motor seized, causing heat to generate, melting all plastic components. The hot plastic dripped onto the nearby magazines. The small fire spread to a chair and carpet. The room received extensive smoke damage and all furnishings had to undergo a thorough cleaning. This small fire caused about \$1,800 in damage.

Most fires resulting from portable fans are related to the fan motors, appliance power

- Do not place fans on combustible surfaces, windowsills, or unstable surfaces.
- Turn fans off when leaving. Overheating of the motor can occur during long operating periods.
- Check the operating voltage prior to plugging the fan into the wall outlet. Not all fans are dual-voltage.
- Keep fans out of small children's reach. Little fingers can squeeze through the fan blade guards.

cords and switches. Some motors fail when they overheat (usually because the fan blades jam or the motor seizes).

Power cords fail when insulation breaks down, cords are crushed or cut leaving bare wires exposed, or short circuit exists. Switches fail due to electrical faults in the switch. (*Aviano Fire Department*)

Voting registration

People can visit the Aviano Base Exchange noon to 6 p.m. today and Saturday for Armed Forces Voter's Week absentee voter registration. This is the last chance to receive an absentee ballot on time. Call Ext. 5357 or e-mail vote@aviano.af.mil for more information.

Palace Front

Airmen can attend a Palace Front briefing 2 p.m. Monday in the 31st Mission Support Group conference room in flightline area Bldg. 1403. For more information, call Ext. 4919.

Palace Chase

Airmen can attend a Palace Chase briefing 3 p.m. Monday, following the Palace Front briefing, in the 31st Mission Support Group conference room. For reservations and more information, call Ext. 4919.

Breastfeeding

La Leche League of Aviano welcomes pregnant and breastfeeding women to a meeting 10 a.m. Monday in the

Chapel Education Center. LLL provides information and support on all aspects of breastfeeding. For more information, call 0434-755-606 or e-mail LLLAviano@yahoo.com.

Spouses club

The next 31st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Spouses Club meeting is 10:30 a.m. Monday in Bldg. 1100, in the flightline area. The group will host a bake sale 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 19 at the Aviano Base Exchange. The spouses club is open to all spouses in the 31st AMXS. For more information, or to volunteer, call Cindy Meyer at 0434-43431 or 340-937-0606.

Home schooling

The Aviano Home School Group meets 2 p.m. Tuesday in the Freedom Park playground area to plan upcoming events for the year. For more information, call Barbara Ford 0427-778-384 or 340-147-1769.

Project Cheer

U.S. Air Forces in Europe Services is giving away a new

Chevrolet Equinox sport utility vehicle Sept. 18. The drawing is open to everyone 18 years and older with a valid Department of Defense ID card. Entry forms are available at USAFE Services facilities and must be faxed or mailed to arrive at USAFE Services headquarters by Sept. 17.

Focus Group

The Army Air Force Exchange Service and Defense Commissary Agency invite Aviano people to a focus group 9:30 a.m. Oct. 6 in the 31st Mission Support Group conference room to discuss ways to improve AAFES and DeCA operations. To reserve a space, call Ext. 7614. For more information, call 338-852-3076.

Volunteers needed

The Hispanic Heritage Month base committee meets noon Thursdays at La Bella Vista Club. They need volunteers to help plan and organize base events being held Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. For more information, call Ext. 7205.

Commissary sale

The DeCA worldwide case lot sale takes place Sept. 25 and 26 at the Aviano Commissary. For more information, visit www.commissaries.com.

Classes

The University of Phoenix offers classes one night a week starting this month. Each class will be six weeks of instruction on ground programs in the Masters level in Business Administration and Arts and Education Curriculum and Instruction. For more information, call Michele Rhoutsong at Ext. 5139 or stop by the University of Phoenix office at the Aviano Education Center.

Licensing Office

The Aviano vehicle licensing office's new hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday. Once a new Benvenuti instructor is hired, licensing office hours will return to normal. AFI testing during Right Start is now 10:25 a.m. Thursdays at the Aviano Family Support Center.

Personal Effects

Any person or persons with claims for or against the estate of Senior Airman Eda Mae Sims should call Summary Court Officer 2nd Lt. Richard Lebron at Ext. 4109.

Travel vouchers

Civilian and military travelers must file a completed travel settlement voucher with Finance within five days of returning from a temporary duty assignment. Due to the fiscal year-end close-out, travel voucher settlements should be filed within three days of returning from a TDY in August and September. For more information, call 1st Lt. Jessi Rozman at Ext. 7458.

Pay change

Dining facilities in Area Two and the flightline open soon. Once they are both open, there will be pay changes for dorm residents. Cost of Living Allowance will be reduced and Basic Allowance for Sustenance will have automatic meal deductions. Those with questions concerning these changes can call finance customer service at Ext. 7409.

Bag lunch

The Aviano Family Support Center invites spouses of deployed troops to bring a bag lunch and socialize noon to 1:30 p.m. Tuesdays at the FSC. For more information, call the Aviano Red Cross at 0434-66-5576 or the FSC at 0434-66-5407.

Bible Study

The Church of the Living God International invites Aviano people to a bible study 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesdays in Area One Bldg. 168, Room 85. For more information, call Ericka Haskins at 0434-66-5019.

Language class

The English as a Second Language program at Aviano Elementary School provides a comprehensive program of instruction for ESL students to attain goals and benchmarks as set forth in the Department of Defense Education Association Strategic Plan. For more information, call 632-5677 or e-mail lucida@eu.odcdodea.edu

Reel Times

Today - 5 p.m. "Catwoman" Rated PG-13 -- Catwoman is not necessarily prone to erring on the side of good. Starring: Halle Berry and Sharon Stone.

8 p.m. - "Catwoman"

Saturday - 2 p.m. "The Notebook" Rated PG-13 -- A couple is separated by World War II and reunited seven years later. Starring: James Garner and Gena Rowlands.

7 p.m. - "White Chicks" Rated PG-13 -- Two FBI agents go undercover to solve a crime. Starring: Shawn Wayans and Marlon Wayans.

Sunday - 7 p.m. - "Catwoman"

Wednesday - 7 p.m. "White Chicks"

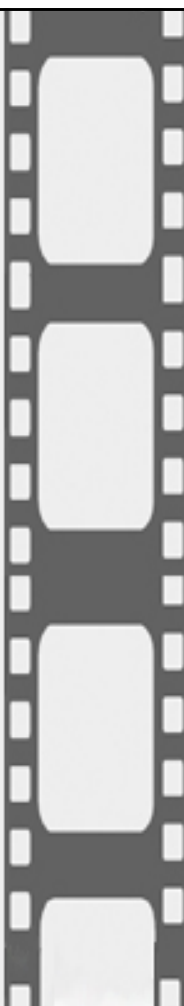
Thursday - 7 p.m. "Catwoman"

September 17 - 5 p.m. "King Arthur" Rated PG-13 -- Arthur and his knights face the Saxons in battle. Starring: Clive Owen and Ioan Gruffudd.

8 p.m. - "The Manchurian Candidate" Rated R -- Two U.S. soldiers are brainwashed into becoming assassins. Starring: Denzel Washington and Meryl Streep.

September 18 - 2 p.m. "Spider Man 2" Rated PG-13 -- Peter encounters a new foe, Dr. Octavius. Starring: Tobey Maguire and Kirsten Dunst.

7 p.m. - "The Manchurian Candidate"



Surviving a **NIGHTMARE**

The story of how one serious mistake – driving drunk – changed my life

Story of Airman Nicholas Branham as told to Staff Sgt. Julie Weckerlein

It was the silence and stillness that got to me. When I opened my eyes, I noticed I was hanging upside down in my car. I didn't realize it then, but the roof was smashed in just centimeters from my head and my feet were encased in a tangle of steel and plastic. The steering wheel and dashboard were shoved up in front of me, not even an inch from my chest. I should have been dead, but the seatbelt was holding me back. I didn't know all this at that moment, of course.

Instead, I called out for my friend. I could sense that he was still in the car next to me, hanging against his seatbelt. But he didn't respond.

"Lucas, man, we got to get out of here!" I shouted. There was no response. I couldn't move my hands up to reach him, so I started really screaming for him, frantic to get a reaction. But my screams went unanswered, and an awful feeling sank into the pit of my stomach – a feeling of guilt so raw and deep, I can't even describe it.

I was convinced I killed my friend by driving drunk.

The Good Life

Nothing in my life could have predicted that I would become a drunk driver.

I grew up in the small Midwest town of Green, Ohio – a middle-class town outside of Akron known for its family environment and good school system. I lived in that area all my life with my younger sister and my parents.

I wasn't a football jock or anything in school. I was more of a "floater" – I was friends with everyone. I guess you can say I've always been a motivated person, though. While in the eighth grade, I decided I was going into the Air Force after graduation, the first person in my family to do so. I knew I wanted to work with F-16s – little surprise since my father builds F-16 flight simulators for Lockheed Martin while my mother owns her own upholstery business which is contracted out to make the F-16 cockpit covers for

Lockheed. During high school, I joined the Junior ROTC. I also studied computer science and did some computer programming. I earned enough credits to graduate from high school six months early in 2001.

And just as I planned since the eighth grade, I enlisted in the Air Force as an F-16 crew chief.

When I learned that my first duty station was Aviano with the 31st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, I was a little disappointed. I wasn't sure if I really wanted to go overseas. My parents, though, thought it was pretty cool.

"Not many people have that opportunity," they told me. So, I made up my mind to enjoy it and to do my best while stationed there.

I arrived in June 2002 at the age of 19 and within two and a half months, I was deployed. It was a neat experience, even though there was an awful lot of sand and an awful lot of



Staff Sgt. Julie Weckerlein

Airman Nicholas Branham's drunk driving incident cost the 31st Fighter Wing a down day in March, but he lost so much more.

nothing to do. When I returned to Aviano, I focused on my job and earned firewall 5s on my enlisted performance reports. I even made below-the-zone and put on senior airman early.

I loved my job, too. As a crewchief, I get to launch and recover the jets and make sure they're ready to fly. It's a tough job – ultimately, I'm responsible for my jet and the pilot. But it's what I've always wanted to do.

I was deployed a second time in December 2003. It was an "ordinary" deployment, and I was glad to be back in Aviano early March 2004. I was able to test for staff sergeant around that time. I lived off-base in my own home and I was excited about being able to drive my 1991 Lancia Delta HF Turbo again. It had low mileage, spotless interior, strong motor, no dents, the paint was like new and I added some performance parts and such. It

was my baby. My life was good.

Living a Nightmare

My friend, who everyone called Lucas, was a fellow crew chief. We decided to go to a bar the night of March 19, no big deal. My 21st birthday was just 10 days before and considering we just got back from deployment, we felt like celebrating and that included drinking.

When I first arrived to Aviano, I took full advantage of the "no age-limit" and drank as much alcohol as I could. After moving out of the dorms, though, I mellowed out. I never drank during the week because I didn't feel it was responsible to go to work the next morning with a hangover. And I never went out on the weekends with the sole purpose of getting trashed. But going to a bar sometimes results in getting trashed, and March 19 was no exception.

Now, every time my buddies

and I went out drinking, we always made a plan. That night, our plan was to use Airmen Against Drunk Driving or call a friend to come pick us up. We'd use AADD before and didn't have any problems with it. To us, it was a pretty decent plan.

We got to the bar and started drinking, taking shots. Consequently, we drank too much. By two in the morning, my friend was outside the bar, throwing up. That's when I decided to take him home. This is where our plan failed.

I've been asked if I thought about the fact that I was deciding to drive drunk. I must admit, I hesitated. The cell phone was in my hand to make the call to AADD. But for some reason, I decided not to call. My friend was pretty sick and I thought he needed to get home right then. Alcohol clouds a person's judgment, and it's easy to say I wasn't thinking clearly.

But I think also my choice had something to do with pride and arrogance. I honestly thought that it wouldn't happen to me.

But not even five minutes away from the bar, it did happen.

I was driving down a narrow road about two minutes away from my house when I was passed by another driver. Whoever passed me was close enough to scare me and cause me to swerve. Unfortunately, when I swerved, there was a six-foot ditch to my right.

When the car landed, the wheels were jerked to the right, and we were pulled into a concrete pole. The car hit the pole directly in line with the steering wheel about two feet off the ground. My car climbed the pole, flipped and we landed upside down in the ditch.

Lives changed forever

I managed to unbuckle my seatbelt and climb out myself with some cuts and bruises. As it turned out, my friend was not

dead. He was knocked out from blasting his head on my passenger window. The Polizia almost had to use the jaws of life to get him out of the car. When I finally saw Lucas in the light, the right side of his face and head was a giant patch of what looked like bloody hamburger meat littered with broken glass and dirt. His right hand was lying on top of his wrist, his teeth were red with blood and he was covered in mud.

I was breathlized before we were both rushed to the hospital. I blew a .255, nearly five times over the legal limit.

Surviving the nightmare

The days following the incident went by in a blur. I was released from the hospital within a day; my friend's recovery wasn't so quick. He still has scars and only partial movement of his right hand: all because of me; all because I put the keys in the ignition.

Amazingly, though, we're still close, even closer than before. Yet, I have to live with the fact that I seriously injured one of my best friends. This one is the most painful of the consequences.

Fortunately, he's forgiven me. Unfortunately, his wife has not and she may never.

Calling my parents the following day was horrible. It was the worst call I ever had to make and one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. They had to deal with both their anger and disappointment, as well as the relief that nobody was killed.

Returning to work was awful. Everyone freely expressed their surprise and disappointment in me. I wasn't allowed to work on the flight line and was stuck doing remedial work around the office. That was a hard thing to cope with, especially coming from my line of supervision. I had tried my best to be a stellar airman my whole career and yet I made one serious mistake,



It's hard to believe this vehicle was once Airman Nicholas Branham's pride and joy. "I'm not a churchgoing person," said Airman Branham, "but the fact we survived the wreck indicates that there was someone, or something, watching over us."

and that is all it took to set me back.

It was about three months for the bureaucratic process to work. The Air Force determined that I'm not an alcoholic, that I don't have a dependency on it - I just made a stupid, serious mistake with it. Eventually, I received an Article 15 and went from senior airman to airman. I lost \$668 a month for two months and received 30 days extra duty. I paid more than \$1,000 in fines and impound fees, not to mention the money I lost in the value of my car. The base also suspended my driving privileges, so now I depend on my friends to drive me around.

To make matters worse, the promotion list results came out with my name on it. So, altogether, I lost three stripes.

Moving on

My life since the incident has been a roller coaster. I wish I could say that things have slowly gotten better, but that's not true.

I drive by the scene of the wreck every day. At first, the sight of it gave me chills. But now, it's just a reminder.

Every day, I put on a uniform with one stripe knowing there should be four.

The future isn't entirely bleak, though. I thought about getting out as soon as possible, but I signed up for six years and I'm going to serve that completely. Despite everything, I still love the Air Force.

I also intend to get my rank back. A part of me is driven just to spite those who've said it's impossible. But mostly I want it because I know I can do it. I know if I put my mind to it, I can.

No matter what, though, I'm going to carry with me the lessons I've learned from this, and I'm going to share them with others in hopes they don't make the same mistake. I hope that just one person learns something from my story, because it's not an easy one to tell. If this can happen to me, it really can happen to anyone. Driving drunk is so avoidable, too.

If someone drives to a bar and drinks, they should give their keys to someone who will not give them back, like the bartender. Stuff happens and plans fall through, but trust me.

The feeling of believing I killed my friend was the worst. And seeing his scars today is so hard. Just take my word on one thing - I hope no one ever has to experience it like I did.

Fly Bys

Wine Festival

La Bella Vista Club offers a free Wine Festival Sept. 24, featuring dozens of wineries and cheese vendors from throughout the Friuli and Veneto regions. Call Ext. 7451 for more information.

Vacation location

Aviano travelers can make an appointment with an Information, Tickets and Travel representative to design their next vacation. Call Ext. 5072 for more information.

Travel Web site

Americans with travel plans should visit <http://travel.state.gov> to get the latest travel advisories in Europe. Maintained by the U.S. Department of State, the Web site offers a list of places suspected of anti-American activity, as well as other information for travelers. Call the 31st Fighter Wing Manpower Office at Ext. 7308 with questions about the site or other antiterrorism force protection measures.

EPMOC

The Fall 2004 European Protestant Men Of the Chapel Conference is Oct. 15 to 17 at the Sauerland Stern Resort Hotel, Willingen Germany. The reservation deadline is Sept. 14, and registration deadline is Sept. 27. For more information, call the USAFE Chaplain's Office at DSN 480-6961, Commercial 06371-476961 or e-mail usafe.hcx@ramstein.af.mil.

Open-air markets

Local Italian villages hold open-air markets one day each week. The following schedule identifies the market day for area villages: Monday - Maniago, Azzano Decimo, Vittorio Veneto, Lignano; Tuesday - Aviano, Casarsa, Codroipo, San Quirino; Wednesday - Pordenone, Budoia, Thursday - Roveredo, Fontanafredda, Sacile, Montereale, Portogruaro; Friday - Cordenons, Porcia, San Vito al Tagliamento, Conegliano; Saturday - Pordenone, Spilimbergo, Caorle, Treviso; Sunday - Udine

Italian-American festival

Friendship, food, music and fun

On behalf of the Aviano Air Base Honorary Squadron Commanders, AHSC President Maurizio Salvador, invites the people of Aviano Air Base to the Italian-American Friendship Fest 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday at the Parco Villa Cattaneo in San Quirino.

People are welcome to bring their family and friends to the day's events.

Some of the events planned for the fest include a noncompetitive 7 kilometer run/walk through the countryside around the Villa Cattaneo Park, games, music and lunch hosted by the Veterans Alpini Association from San Quirino and Montereale.

There will also be activities for children and games for people to play.

San Quirino is about 10 kilometers from the base.

To get there, people can go down the AP highway toward Pordenone and take a left at the first traffic light. From there, it's just a matter of following the posted signs.

Admission is free for the Friendship Walk/Run, and it begins at 9:30 a.m. The event ends at noon. Prizes will be awarded to the largest and most-represented groups -- there is a 15 person minimum.

Squadrons are encouraged to participate in the events as teams. The award ceremony is noon to 12:30 p.m.

The walk travels through country roads, and will be held rain or shine. Participants should dress according to the weather. The walk/run starts and finishes at Villa Cattaneo Park.

Walkers must abide by the Italian Traffic Code.

No physical or medical certificate is

Events

Festival-goers will have a variety of activities and events to choose from during Sunday's festival: face painting • jumping castle • tug-of-war • sumo wrestling • balloon animals • soccer games • arts and crafts • pony and horse rides • K-9 military dog demonstrations • static displays • Fanfara Bersaglieri band • Red Angels band • Righa Big Band and much more. All local Italian and American people are invited to attend.

required to participate, but the organization bears no responsibility, civil or criminal, for anything that might happen to participants.

Medical assistance and recovery service will be available.

The day's events will take place as follows:

- 10 to 11:30 a.m. - Noncompetitive walk/run
- 11 a.m. to noon - Archer game
- 11:30 to noon - Awards ceremony
- Noon to 2 p.m. - Lunch hosted by Veterans Alpini Association of San Quirino and Montereale
- 1 to 4 p.m. - Popular music
- 2 to 5 p.m. - Popular games
- 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Children's activities
- 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Arts and crafts, band music, painting exhibits by Immagine Giovani and other attractions. (31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs)

Be accountable. Always let someone know when you plan to leave the area, and when you plan to return – even if you're just going to Venice.

Oktoberfest is an annual celebration in Munich, Germany, at which the traveler can find lots of drinks, food and music. Sign up by Wednesday.



ITT: Information, Tickets and Travel

Upcoming tours from the Information, Tickets and Travel office include:

- Oktoberfest, Munich -- Sept. 18. Sign up by Wednesday.
- Wine tasting -- Sept. 18. Sign up by Wednesday.

- Guided Trieste, castle and cave -- Sept. 25. Sign up by Sept. 22.
- Guided Verona and Medieval Times -- Sept. 25. Sign up by Sept. 22.
- October 9 through 11 -- Naples and the Amalfi Coast (Naples, Capri, Pompeii, Sorrento, Positano and Amalfi)

For more information about ITT tours, call Ext. 5072 or 5026.

Fly Bys

Flag Football

Intramural flag football letters of intent must be turned in to the Dragon Fitness Center before the season starts Tuesday. For more information, call Ext. 7574.

Bowling League

Winter league bowling registration takes place 3 to 5 p.m. Sept. 20 at the Aviano Bowling Center. League bowling runs 28 weeks, with holiday weeks off. Call Ext. 7487 for more information.

Ice Hockey

The Aviano Ice Dragons base hockey team seeks players for the 2004-2005 season. All ability and experience levels are welcome. For more information, call Michael McGeever at Ext. 8455, Billy Liska at Ext. 8767, or Roberto Scussat at 632-4664.

Towels

The Dragon Fitness Center is offering a throw-in-the-towel program. After a workout at the fitness center, staff will swap used towels for clean ones. Towels can be bought at the Aviano Base Exchange or Military Clothing Sales for \$2.15. People can opt to use and wash their own towels.

Steppin' Up

An all-level aerobic step class with energetic moves to strengthen muscle and heart is offered throughout the week at the Dragon Fitness Center. The class begins 6 a.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and 9 a.m. Saturdays. For more information, call Ext. 7459.

Yoga for Everyone

People can experience basic yoga poses and find a healthier body and mind in the class "Yoga for Everyone" at the Dragon Fitness Center. The class begins 12:30 Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and 10 a.m. Tuesdays. For more information, call Ext. 7459.



Airman 1st Class Scherrie Gates

Celebrating victory

Members of the Aviano Dragon softball team congratulate each other after clinching a victory over the team from Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England, during an elimination round in the 2004 USAFE Softball Championship games here Sept. 1. The Dragons finished second place overall in the tournament.

Did you know? Massage is a powerful stress reliever which promotes a healthier immune system.

Elliptical cross-trainers: The all-for-one workout

People looking for a workout that will go gentle on their joints needn't look farther than an elliptical cross-training machine.

These machines give bodies a complete body workout in less than an hour, and they combine running, rowing, climbing and cycling.

Elliptical cross-trainers are designed with beginners in mind, yet they also offer an intensive workout to professional athletes. Because the machines mimic natural body movements, they are easy to use. In fact, most people are immediately comfortable with the motions.

The machines hold a person's feet in place, so impact during the workout is

Start out easy

Remember that with any workout plan, a person must start out easy. Many people make the mistake of starting with too much enthusiasm and they end up hurting themselves. By beginning at an easy level and pace, the risk of injury is greatly reduced.

eliminated. The jarring of ankles, knees, hips, backs and other joints, which is a part of running, walking or doing aerobics, simply doesn't occur. For those who suffer from problems

in those areas, elliptical cross-training is often an excellent choice of workout.

Upper-body, cardiovascular and lower-body exercise can all be completed in one routine on the elliptical cross-trainer. One of its best benefits is that it offers a complete workout that burns calories and provides a myriad of health and fitness benefits without the accidents associated with even low-impact regimens.

The Dragon Fitness Center offers a number of cross-trainer machines for its patrons. Call Ext. 7459 for more information. *(Courtesy of the Air Force Services Fitness and Sports Newsletter)*

UPCLOSE

and personal with Aviano's best

Tech. Sgt. Elliott McCanick has attitude and it's the kind that gets noticed. Described as having a "can-do" state-of-mind, Sergeant McCanick was also recently selected for promotion to master sergeant. "He is truly a behind-the-scenes warrior and deserving of our recognition," said Chief Master Sgt. Edward Hassan, 31st Operations Group, who nominated Sergeant McCanick one of Aviano's best.



Q: Why did you enlist in the Air Force?

A: To travel to other countries, get to know cultures firsthand rather than read it from history books. I also wanted to serve my country honorably and make my family proud.

Q: Where are you from?

A: I'm from Houston and Lubbock, Texas. Houston is the best city in Texas and Lubbock is the best town.

Q: What's your favorite Air Force memory thus far?

A: Everyday is an Air Force memory. I will focus on the good ones and look back on them when I retire. That day will be a great day.

Q: Speaking of great days, what's your idea of a perfect day?

A: Relaxing at the North Sea Jazz Festival in Holland, or going on Spring Break at Lloret De Mar in Spain.

Q: What's your job?

A: I'm the NCOIC for the 510th Air Mobility Unit material support element. We are the first stop before the 31st Logistics Readiness Squadron "One Stop" when handling flightline supply issues.

Q: What do you like best about your job?

A: We build a strong team with hundreds of different personalities that yield excellence in everything we are tasked to do. I enjoy meeting, learning and respecting each individual.

Q: If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be, and why?

A: Fair, honest and reliable.

Fair because everyone is equal and should be respected. Rank is a part of the job that separates decision making, action and planning. Honesty is the key to success in everything you do. And reliable because I may not be the one who always does it, but I will be the one who see it get done.

Q: If your coworkers could describe you in three words, what would those words be?

A: Loud, confident and intelligent.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

A: Working at another job, making new memories and enjoying life with great friends and family.

(Staff Sgt. Julie Weckerlein, 31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs editor)

Know a sharp troop? Get them recognized! Send names and phone numbers to vigileer@aviano.af.mil

People, skills make Air Force work

By Lt. Col. Russell Quinn

52nd Operations Support Squadron,
Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany

So what is your story? What is it that made you choose this line of work anyway?

I ask only to point out something you may not have considered. This is an amazing time to be in the service of our country, and an even more amazing time to be a member of the United States Air Force.

Consider these two things: The U.S. Air Force is by far the most powerful, precise and advanced air force that exists on Earth today. You are part of that. In fact, you are integral to that power and precision. You need to know, whoever you are or whatever your skill level, that we would not be as strong as we are without you.

Equipment is great, but the people make the Air Force work. Ask anybody, inside or outside our military. The individuals we work with today are the smartest, most talented and motivated

group of people we will most likely ever work with in our life. We're very lucky that they are so focused when you consider the critical nature of our current conflict.

Our window of opportunity to make a difference is a relatively small window. For some people, it will be three to four years; for others, it may be 20 to 25 years. Either way, we as individual members of the U.S. Air Force will spend the vast majority of our lives outside the service of our country. You may not look at your service this way, but I look at it that way every day.

Having joined at the age of 18 and served continuously until this day, I feel so very fortunate to have experienced so many things in the service of this great nation. There is plenty of time in the future to wake up knowing that some other individual is in the arena; right now, it's our time. Consider that, and if you feel the same way I do, appreciate every minute, value every brother and sister in arms and continue doing the outstanding work that you do every day.



Cornerstone

An indispensable and fundamental basis

The **Cornerstone Page** is devoted to those who support: junior enlisted, NCOs, CGOs and spouses. It's to share advice, ideas and opinions dealing with life in the Air Force and Aviano. It's also a forum to recognize those around us. The **Cornerstone Page** will also offer Air Force trivia and facts.

Submission info

We want to hear from you. Flex your writing talents and share your thoughts with us and the community. To submit:

Commentaries:

Writers can send commentaries to vigileer@aviano.af.mil. Commentaries must be 500 to 700 words.

Topics must be applicable to the Air Force, Aviano and appeal to the general public. For questions or concerns, call the Vigileer at Ext. 7344.

Kudos: Aviano members can send kudos to Vigileer @aviano.af.mil with the subject line "Kudos."

Kudos can be submitted for appreciation, retirements, awards, good service, promotions and graduations. For questions or concerns, call the Vigileer at Ext. 7344.

Deadline: The deadline for submitting information is close of business Thursday one week prior to publication. Faxed articles will not be accepted by the staff. The public affairs office is in Bldg. 1360, Room 19.