

The Signature



**SIGONELLA WELCOMES NEW
COMMANDING OFFICER**

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◆
**ABH2 PHILLIP NAMED EURAFCENT
SAILOR OF THE YEAR**

◆
**THREE PATRON
SAINTS' FESTIVAL**

Direct Line

Capt. Aaron Shoemaker, NAS Sigonella Commanding Officer

Buon giorno Sigonella! What an absolute honor it is to work alongside each of you here at NAS Sigonella! An opportunity of a lifetime, for sure, and a dream come true! My wife, Lisa, and our two daughters are beyond excited to join the Sigonella Family as well.

I was first introduced to Sigonella in 2001 during my first deployment as a pilot in VP-26. Sigonella was beautiful then and is even more so today. What began as a young pilot in the cockpit of a P-3 Orion has blossomed into a career that has seen 12 PCS moves in 23 years, deployments all around the world, command of the “World Famous” Fighting Marlins of VP-40, and advisor to the most senior military and civilian leaders in the Department of Defense. I’ve been a part of some amazing teams over my time in the Navy, but none of them match the awe and privilege I feel now.

My approach to our continued success anchors on three fundamental priorities: Professionalism, Fitness, and Family.

Professionalism is knowing your job and doing it well. It’s showing up every day, behaving in a manner consistent with our Core Values, getting the job done, and striving to be better than yesterday. Small improvements grow exponentially when learning is a priority.



I've been a part of some amazing teams over my time in the Navy, but none of them match the awe and privilege I feel now.

Fitness is my term for the Navy’s mission readiness – and it’s much more than physical fitness. Physical fitness enables us to meet the rigorous schedule that our profession demands, to reduce stress and live a healthy lifestyle, and to enjoy life’s pleasures for many years to come. Financial fitness enables us to live comfortably within our means, to provide for ourselves and our families, and to ensure a financially sound future. Mental and intellectual fitness enable us to think quickly under stress, to tackle dynamic and complex challenges, and to keep our most powerful tool – our minds – sharp. Emotional and spiritual fitness enables us to sustain healthy relationships, to provide or receive support when life’s circumstances are too much to handle alone, and to better understand how ethics and morals guide our thoughts and actions.

When I say Family, I emphasize relationships. Every

one of us is a member of the Sigonella Family ... a Family not necessarily defined by birth or marriage, but by relationships. Those that rely on us and those on whom we rely are our Family. Most certainly, our spouses, partners, parents, siblings, and children are included. So too are the 39 tenant commands and supporting organizations with whom we share this base, our Italian teammates, and the surrounding communities in which we live, shop, and recreate. Members of a Family care for one another by providing support during tough times, celebrating successes, and treating each other with dignity and respect. We cannot succeed without healthy relationships with our Family!

Our strength as “Hub of the Med” comes from the unbreakable bonds that we share. I look forward to hearing from and meeting with each and every one of you and your families, and can’t wait to see what more we can accomplish together. Ciao!

When I say Family, I emphasize relationships. Every one of us is a member of the Sigonella Family ... a Family not necessarily defined by birth or marriage, but by relationships.

ABH2 Kimany Phillip Named EURAFCENT Sailor of the Year

Commander, Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central (EURAFCENT) selected Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 2nd Class Kimany Phillip, from Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, as fiscal year 2021 EURAFCENT Sailor of the Year, April 22, 2022.

"Petty Officer Phillip has shown sustained superior performance, deck plate leadership, self-improvement, command impact, and genuine care and concern for our Sailors - truly representing what makes Team Sigonella STRONG!" said Capt. Aaron Shoemaker, NAS Sigonella commanding officer.

Phillip was born in the U.S. Virgin Islands and spent her childhood in the Commonwealth of Dominica. Prior to joining NAS Sigonella in 2019, she previously served on the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), USS George Washington (CVN 72), and USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76).

"ABH2 Phillip is a top performing, motivated and reliable leader who requires no supervision and produces quality work while promoting a productive work environment," listed her supervisors' testimony for her Sailor of the Year application. "Her attention to detail and extensive knowledge in her field leads to the completion of tasks which require no rework and a high satisfaction collectively contributing to the team effort of airfield readiness, FOD prevention, and support for transient aircraft through FIFTH and SIXTH fleet AORs."

In addition to her outstanding work as the admin leading petty officer in the operations department



of NAS Sigonella, Phillip is active in the Second Class Petty Officer Association and serves as a proactive sponsor for inbound sailors, duty section leader, and departmental training officer, among other collateral duties.

During Operation Allies Refuge, Phillip also stood out as a hard charging assistant command duty officer, the only second class petty officer to assume additional duties contributing toward the command's readiness in continuing operations. She also was a key player in five working parties and was the primary assistant to TSA in which she personally accounted for the luggage of transients.

In August 2021, Phillip earned her Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from the University of Maryland Global Campus, making the Dean's List for academic excellence.

THE SIGNATURE

U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION
SIGONELLA

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Editorial submissions are welcomed from all Naval Air Station Sigonella departments, divisions and tenant commands. **Editorial submissions** should be sent to the Public Affairs Office via thesig@eu.navy.mil. All articles submitted by non-staff members will be considered contributing writers.

Lorelei Lewis Named Sigonella Military Youth of the Year

By Megan Mills, *NAS Sigonella Public Affairs*

Lorelei Lewis, a senior at Sigonella Middle/High School, was recently named the 2022 Naval Air Station Sigonella Military Youth of the Year.

“Lorelei is a unique teenager who demonstrates maturity beyond her years,” wrote Channette Ingram, Child and Youth Program teen coordinator at NAS Sigonella. “She is intuitive, creative and possesses a sincere desire to learn in all aspects of her life.”

The Military Youth of the Year is a Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) program created to recognize outstanding teens on U.S. military installations across the globe. Created in 2013, this award is part of the Youth of the Year Program, which serves teens in BGCA-affiliated programs throughout the United States.

According to the Boys & Girls Club website, this program aims to honor “young people, ages 14 to 18, for their commitment to community service, academic success, good character and citizenship, and establishing long-term goals.”

Lewis has been a member of Sigonella’s youth program for two years and has participated in many extracurricular activities, including varsity sports, National Honor Society (co-president), Student Council (senior class treasurer), BGCA Keystone, Dressemer, yearbook, and the 4-H Club (vice president). She has also volunteered as a CYP youth sponsor, an AVID tutor, and library volunteer.

As a military-affiliated youth, Lewis has lived on or near military bases her entire life, including the past 10 years overseas.

“One of the biggest challenges of being a military child is moving from location to location,” said Lewis. “In a lot of ways, I liken it to having a nomadic lifestyle: most military children move roughly every 3 years, taking our belongings and family with us but leaving behind our friends and home each time. I’ve had to learn to make a home out of wherever I move, but though there are definite disadvantages, there are also just as many benefits. Difference does not always equate to disadvantage.”

Once she moved to Sigonella, Lewis found a friendship and strong community through Keystone, a BGCA program that provides “leadership development opportunities for young people ages 14 to 18... in three focus areas: academic success, career preparation and community service,” according to their website.

“My friends invited me to join them during my first year in Sigonella, and I was curious about a lot of the things they did with Keystone,” Lewis recalled. “I joined the Keystone Club to be with them, but unfortunately, our CYP was shut down. We’ve been working to restore it for the past year, though most of the friends I had who originally encouraged me to become involved have since moved.”

Over the past two years, the COVID-19 mitigation measures



meant that many programs, clubs and extracurricular activities were curtailed.

“It’s been tough in a lot of ways,” Lewis said. “Everything shut down for a while, and as a military dependent with no license on a rural base, there hasn’t been much to do. Slowly but surely, however, I and other teens like myself have been working to bring back our clubs, sports, and more to return things to normal.”

Lewis’ dedication to this cause did not go unnoticed.

“Lewis facilitated in the creation of virtual programming for the members of the NAS Sigonella Youth Program,” said Ingram. “Her dedication to the program provided beneficial opportunities to youth during a pandemic. She facilitated service projects for the community and informative seminars for her peers. Her willingness to step up as a leader or a team player is an impressive strength.”

Despite the challenges of her time here, Lewis has enjoyed being part of the CYP and Sigonella team.

“My favorite parts of CYP and school is the camaraderie between everyone,” said Lewis. “We have a goal and a purpose, but above all, we’re here to support and grow with each other, and to push each other to be our best.”



Housing Department Cuts Ribbon on New Playgrounds, A/C Units

By Peter Faulk *NAS Sigonella Housing Director*

The Naval Air Station Sigonella housing department, in conjunction with Pizzarotti, has completed numerous projects this year, including window child safety locks, a new skateboard park, and the renovation of two playgrounds. In addition, the Navy Exchange has upgraded all homes in Marinai Family Housing with fiber internet and two routers to provide better Wi-Fi service.

Currently, the housing department, with Pizzarotti, are working on replacing air conditioning units and all interior lighting in Marinai. For the next three years, 175 units will be completed per year, so any incoming residents will have new A/C units in their units. So far, the housing department has completed A/C replacement in 45 units, along with new LED lighting replacement throughout the entire home. Currently, we are also in the process of lawn sprinkler timer upgrades.

In the next two to three years, the housing department, with Pizzarotti, has scheduled and approved projects such as a perimeter fence replacement, housing unit entryway replacements, security camera installation, a new Splash Park, a new clubhouse, and sheds for the backyards.

Our community has seen a lot of changes recently and will continue to see upgrades and improvements. The housing department is always looking to improve, whether through energy conservation projects, safety projects, or quality of life projects, and that is why the housing survey is so important. When you fill out the housing survey, we are able to see how we can improve not only the property, but also our customer service.

We know it has been a tough year and holiday season for our residents with the recent flood. We want to thank you for your patience and understanding as we have made the necessary fixes in the affected homes. We are currently still following up and making sure everything is completed correctly.

We want to make sure residents know there is a 4 hour response time on all mold service calls. That is because your family health is important to us!

In the month of May, Marinai residents will receive the housing survey. Please contact NASSIG-HousingMarinai@eu.navy.mil to verify or update your contact information in our system.



NASSIG Holds Change

By NAS Sigonella Public Affairs

Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella held a change of command ceremony aboard the installation April 29.

Capt. Aaron Shoemaker relieved Capt. Kevin Pickard Jr. as Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella during a Change of Command ceremony onboard NAS Sigonella (Aeroporto Aeronautica Militare di Sigonella) on Thursday, April 29, 2022.

Rear Adm. Scott Gray, commander, Navy Region Europe, Africa, Southwest Asia (EURAFSWA) served as keynote speaker and praised Pickard for his hard work throughout his tenure.

“Naval Air Station Sigonella has had quite a few unique challenges, and each time you and your team have risen to the occasion – I couldn’t be prouder of the work you all have done here,” said Gray. “As ‘The Hub of the Mediterranean’, your ability to execute the mission quickly, strongly, and efficiently has ensured our effectiveness and resilience.”

Pickard credited his staff of Sailors and civilians for overcoming the many challenges finding new solutions to increase their support to the fleet.

“I want to thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart. In my time as commanding officer of Naval Air Station Sigonella, I have seen our community come together during some of the most difficult and challenging times in recent memory, and more than that, I’ve seen this base become an exemplar of service in ways both big and small. My goal has always been to leave any place I serve a little bit better, and thanks to this supportive, complex, and collaborative community, I can say that we succeeded. Sigonella, I could not be prouder to have served with you.

Pickard has served as the Commanding Officer of NAS



of Command Ceremony

Sigonella since April 2019. His next assignment will be as the Chief of Staff for Commander, Navy Region Northwest in Bangor, Wash. beginning in June 2022. Pickard's command tour at NAS Sigonella strengthened strategic partnerships and reinforced Sigonella's critical role as the "Hub of the Med," the U.S. military's primary logistics base in the Mediterranean. His tour was marked by significant achievements including safely continuing critical U.S. and NATO operations in the COVID-19 environment and serving as a central support base for evacuees from Afghanistan during Operation Allies Refuge.

Also during his tenure NAS Sigonella served as the operational base for Exercise Dynamic Manta, won four consecutive Capt. Edward F. Ney Awards for best overseas galley, and earned the top "Crystal" status for their Housing Department's customer satisfaction. NAS Sigonella supports European Command, Navy Central Command, Africa Command, U.S. FIFTH and SIXTH Fleet units, and NATO forces in the Mediterranean.

Shoemaker said he looked forward to his command of the "Hub of the Med" and highlighted the importance of the base.

"The deploying and tenant commands that we support from Sigonella are literally on the front lines of the defense to both our nation and our fellow alliance partners," said Shoemaker. "Although a defining characteristic may be our geographic location, our strength resides in our people, the Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen, Marines and dedicated civilians who serve on this base."

NAS Sigonella is an operational ashore base that enables U.S., allied, and partner nation forces to be when and where they are needed to ensure security and stability in Europe, Africa, and Southwest Asia.



Italian News

Three Patron Saints' Festival Kicks Off in Trecastagni May 8-10

By Dr. Alberto Lunetta, *NAS Sigonella Public Affairs*

Every year, Trecastagni townspeople show publicly how deep their faith and gratitude is towards their patron saints, "Three Martyred Brothers," during one of the most interesting and spectacular religious festivals in Eastern Sicily.

"Viva St. Alfio!" is what devotees scream during the annual celebration honoring Alfio, Filadelfo and Cirino (St. Alphius, St. Philadelphus, and St. Cyrinus). Alfio was the oldest brother, and his figure became the most prominent among devotees over the centuries.

According to tradition, the name of Trecastagni is linked to the three saints. Some believe that the three brothers ate "castagne" (chestnuts) during their visit to the town. A legend tells that three chestnut trees, which are very common in the area, would miraculously sprout from the empty shells dropped by the brothers. Other traditions maintain that Trecastagni comes by the Latin words "Tres Casti Agni" (Three Chaste Lambs), a name that remembers the tragic sacrifice of these three young heroes of Catholicism.

Devotees typically undertake long barefoot pilgrimages, which can last several hours, from the local towns surrounding to the Sanctuary of St. Alfio to thank the three saints for being saved or cured during an illness or a disaster. The Sanctuary is perceived as a gift from God that invites pilgrims to reflect on the story of the painful journey that those beloved martyrs undertook on foot from Apulia to Lentini, where they were eventually executed for not giving up their faith.

"Some of them come here at dawn before they get to work," said Father Torrisi, former parish priest of the Trecastagni sanctuary who retired in 2018. Sometimes, the pilgrims' gratitude takes the artistic form of "Ex Voto," small paintings depicting the incident that occurred to the devotees, which are donated to the sanctuary. Ex Voto also include the donation of artificial limbs to symbolize the part of the body which pilgrims believe to have been healed thanks to the saints' blessing.

Trecastagni has an impressive collection of hundreds of



Just like parents share love among all their children, Trecastagni townspeople share their faith among three patron saints, the Martyr Brothers or "Alfio, Filadelfo and Cirino," who are celebrated from May 8 through 10. Devotees believe these saints have the power to win divine aid for mortal petitioners by interceding with God. Celebrations, which go back to the 16th century, include solemn relics' processions, Sicilian folklore parades, pilgrimages, arts and crafts, fireworks, music and the traditional garlic fair. (Photo by <https://www.facebook.com/LaFestadiSantAlfioaTrecastagni>)

these small icons, which are works of art mainly made by Aci Sant'Antonio Sicilian carts' craftsmen, dating back to the 19th century. These art pieces reveal the hopes, joys and sorrows of thousands of people who have been turning to the brother saints for assistance for centuries, including women suffering from difficult pregnancies, young men who survived a car crash or a deadly illness, and people who, for different reasons, found themselves in need of help.

Celebrations dating back to the 16th century include religious processions and dramas, as well as a spectacular parade of Sicilian carts, concerts of local bands, and the traditional garlic fair, which celebrates springtime. In Trecastagni, garlic is the symbol of the devotees' participation in the festival and is traditionally believed to keep evil away and grant health and protection from illness.

Feasts of the Three Saints are also held in other parts of Sicily (St. Alfio, St. Fratello and Lentini), Italy (Vaste near Lecce), and the world (Lawrence, Massachusetts (USA) and Sidney (Australia)).



Truman Carrier Strike Group Arrives in Italy

By Petty Officer 1st Class Jamaica Johnson, *Carrier Strike Group 8*

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) and Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen-class frigate HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen (F310) arrived in Trieste, Italy, while the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS San Jacinto (CG 56) arrived in Porto di Marghera, for scheduled port visits, April 23, 2022.

Since arriving to the Mediterranean Sea in December, the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group (HSTCSG), including Truman, Fridtjof Nansen and San Jacinto, have routinely operated alongside the Italian Armed Forces.

“Prior to our visit, we sailed alongside our Italian partners at sea during multiple operations with the aircraft carrier ITS Cavour (C 550) and several Italian surface ships,” said Rear Adm. Curt Renshaw, commander, Carrier Strike Group 8. “All involved demonstrated our ability to integrate seamlessly.”

Key maritime integration events have included tri-carrier operations among HSTCSG, the ITS Cavour carrier strike group and the FS Charles de Gaulle carrier strike group, as well as Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1’s combined operations with the Italian Air Force. Truman has continued supporting NATO’s defensive capabilities by participating in enhanced Air Policing (eAP) mission on the Alliance’s Eastern flank.

Though bolstering U.S. commitment to the NATO Alliance is key to Truman’s presence in the region, routine port visits provide the opportunity to reinforce our enduring connection with Italy. Capt. Gavin Duff, Truman’s commanding officer, emphasized the importance of multinational cooperation demonstrated by routine port visits.

“A significant aspect of this deployment is centered on our longstanding relationships with European allies and partners, to include Italy,” said Duff. “In the same way we

have benefited from our training with the extraordinary professionals of the Italian Navy and Air Force, we are grateful for the opportunity to experience the culture, history and generosity of the Italian people.”

Echoing Capt. Duff’s comments on the importance of port visits to overall cultural exchanges and interpersonal relations among allies and partners, Cmdr. Glen Atherton, San Jacinto’s executive officer, spoke to the benefits of port visits to all involved.

“The Sailors in this strike group have been doing a phenomenal job in contributing to the NATO mission,” said Atherton. “This port visit is a great way for our crew to relax from the daily demands of being out to sea.”

Truman is the flagship of the HSTCSG; additional elements of the carrier strike group include the nine squadrons of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 1, commanded by Capt. Patrick Hourigan; the staff and guided-missile destroyers of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 28, commanded by Capt. Todd Zenner, which include: USS Bainbridge (DDG 96), USS Cole (DDG 67), USS Gonzalez (DDG 66), USS Gravelly (DDG 107) and USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109); the Royal Norwegian Navy’s HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen, deployed as part of the Cooperative Deployment Program; and San Jacinto, commanded by Capt. Christopher Marvin.

The strike group is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations in support of naval operations to maintain and generate maritime stability and security, for the U.S., and Allied and Partner interests in Europe and Africa.

For more news from CSG 8, visit, www.facebook.com/CSG8, www.navy.mil/local.cvn75/, www.facebook.com/usnavy, www.instagram.com/uss_harrys.truman, www.navy.mil, or www.twitter.com/usnavy.



Insights From the Palermo Catacombs

By Megan Mills, *NAS Sigonella Public Affairs*, photo by Dr. Kirsty Squires

From the outside, it could be just another building in Palermo—nondescript, two story, sandy-colored, and perhaps a little run down. The entrance is tucked off in a corner, and the hallway on the other side of it wouldn't be out of place in a Sicilian office building. Downstairs, however, are the Capuchin Catacombs, housing over 1,000 mummified and skeletonized human bodies.

Visitors to the Palermo catacombs wander through multiple underground corridors lined with human remains. Some are displayed fully upright in the many alcoves lining the walls; others lie in open caskets. Their clothing ranges from simple wraps to fancy outfits full of accessories. Some bodies are only bones, some are in various states of preservations, and a few, like Rosalia Lombardo, who was embalmed at the age of two, look like they are merely resting.

The experience of walking through these halls, which house the largest collection of mummies in Europe, can be overwhelming.

For Dr. Kirsty Squires, associate professor of bioarchaeology at Staffordshire University, these catacombs are also an invaluable way to learn about the lives of the children who lie within.



Bioarchaeologists study human remains and the objects buried with them in order to gain insight into the people and the customs of the past.

When Squires met Dr. Dario Piombino-Mascali of Vilnius University at an academic conference, she was intrigued by his presentation on the Capuchin Catacombs and how little research had been done. Together, they assembled an international team to use innovative and respectful methods to study 41 unnamed children who died between 1787

and 1880.

“We can learn a wealth of information about children through the use of non-invasive methods (e.g. radiography),” wrote Squires in an email. “We can estimate how old they were when they died, and we can identify developmental defects, if they suffered from any disease that affected the skeleton, and signs of trauma. We can then use this information alongside the type of mummification they were afforded, their clothing, and funerary artefacts (e.g. chair, coffin, soft furnishings) to better understand who these children were, how they were perceived by the living (which would have influenced the funerary rite offered), and why they were mummified.”

In addition to a radiographer, who uses a portable X-ray machine to take images without damaging the fragile remains, the team also includes an artist.

“We can only use photography for the purpose of academic conference presentations and publications. The artist (Eduardo Hernandez) was invited to join the team due to the outreach we will be doing as part of the project,” wrote Squires. “We need to illustrate teaching packs (in English and Italian), tourist leaflets, and outreach activities - the lack of imagery would not convey the processes that were undertaken and the mummies examined. In addition, he will be producing scenes of daily life with an emphasis on children.”

The Juvenile Mummy Project will last two years and has been featured in *The Guardian* and CNN. According to Squires, the diversity on the team has been crucial to its success.

“Working with such a diverse international team has been enlightening as it offers an opportunity to overcome challenges from different perspectives,” she wrote. “Given the unique skillset of each team member, I have also learnt about new techniques and more about the history of the catacombs and local area. I am very lucky to work with such a fantastic team.”

According to the Palermo Catacombs website, the Capuchin monastery in Palermo was established in 1534. By 1597, the room used as a mass grave was overflowing, so newly deceased bodies were placed in a vault while a new one was built. When

Illustration by Eduardo Hernandez

"Mummies" cont'd from Page 10

the monks exhumed those bodies to transfer them, 45 were found to be naturally mummified. Believing this to be an act of god, the friars displayed their brethren as relics.

Over time, people began to ask to have their remains preserved in the monastery as well, the act of which became a status symbol. In 1783, the Capuchins decided to allow anyone to be buried inside, but in 1880 the catacombs were closed to new burials with some exceptions such as Giovanni Paterniti, an American vice-consul, in 1911 and Rosalia Lombardo after she passed from pneumonia in 1920.

Although some research has been done on the adults displayed in the catacombs, the children have never been studied specifically, something Squires aims to rectify with the Juvenile Mummy Project.

"It is important to study the children as they are all too often overlooked when we study the past; if we do not learn about these children we cannot

fully understand past societies," wrote Squires. "Furthermore, this study aims to further emphasize the socio-cultural significance of mummification in late modern Palermo."

Fieldwork for the project, which involved archive research, radiography and visits to relevant sites in Palermo, began in January 2022. Although results won't be available for months, the team recently published an academic article about the ethics of displaying and studying child mummies. More information can be found at the project's website: <https://juvenilemummyproject.wixsite.com/palermo>

Although the catacombs are currently closed to visitors for renovations, Squires has insightful advice for anyone who plans to visit them in the future:

"I would advise visitors to read about the catacombs prior to visiting. The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly,

there are no information boards in the catacombs so many visitors leave not fully appreciating the socio-cultural importance of this funerary rite during the late modern period. Secondly, some visitors are shocked when they see the mummified children and the large number of deceased individuals in the catacombs. By reading about the mummies and the catacombs, visitors have a better idea in terms of what to expect (though avoid newspaper articles with sensationalist titles as these do not tend to be informative; our project webpage includes a blog and a list of useful resources that we will add to on a regular basis: <https://juvenilemummyproject.wixsite.com/palermo>).

She continued, "I think visiting the catacombs is a special experience as you are not only faced by your own mortality but it is an incredible snapshot into history whereby the display of mummified individuals was an important custom."

"Italian News" cont'd from Page 8**Life of the Three Saints**

The first historical sources that discuss the three saints can be found in a manuscript by a monk who lived in the 11th century and in a book written by priest Filadelfio Mauro in 1691. Both lived in Lentini.

The three saints were born in Vaste (Lecce) in the third century. During the Roman persecutions of Christians, the brothers were arrested and forced to leave Sicily to go to Rome, where they were convicted and tortured. Since they belonged to a noble family, Romans feared that they could influence other aristocrats, so they used them as scapegoats to convince the others to stay away from the Catholic religion. Historic chronicles tell of miracles worked by the saints, including the fact that every place they visited became a Catholic community.

After being tortured in Pozzuoli and then back in Sicily, they were eventually martyred in Lentini on May 10, 253 AD.

Festival Schedule Highlights

During the days preceding the festival, several processions of three candelore (heavy wooden floats about six meters in height, with a big main wax candle surrounded by sculptures representing the martyrdom of the three saints) leave from the Saint Alfio's sanctuary.

On May 8, after the towns' bands perform throughout

the historic center, the procession of the relics of the saints begins from the main church at 8:30 p.m. The procession lasts until late evening.

The "Nudi" barefoot pilgrimage, which is performed on the night between May 9 and 10, is a must-see. Devotees, wearing white shorts and a red band around their chest, walk (some barefoot) from Catania and other Etna towns to the Sanctuary of St. Alfio.

The actual festival's day is May 10. It starts with the unveiling of the Three Saints' Statues, which is performed before a huge crowd of devotees in the morning. The ceremony takes place at the Saint Alfio's Sanctuary, located in piazza St. Alfio, where the statues are usually kept. After that, the statues are placed on the "fercolo" (carriage) to be ready for the long afternoon procession.

Later on, the first solemn procession begins at 1 p.m., during which the statues will be carried throughout the historic center among screaming devotees and paper stripes with the phrase "Long Live St. Alfio," written on them. After the stop at the main church (Chiesa Madre di San Nicola) the procession is repeated at 6 p.m. and lasts until late at night. Fireworks and band music will be performed during the festival.

As the schedule might be subject to changes, you can also check the updated schedule by visiting: <https://www.facebook.com/LaFestadiSantAlfioaTrecastagni/>

AFE BRINGS THE **ACTION**

TANJI
"STEALTH"
JOHNSON

BETH
"VENOM"
HORN

ALEX
"MILITIA"
CASTRO

AMERICAN GLADIATORS



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