

## COOKEVILLE VETERAN COMPETES FOR A CAUSE

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Scales

By MEGAN TROTTER

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Charlynda Scales' grandfather had a huge influence on her life when she lived in Cookeville. The late Charlie "Mutt" Ferrell Jr. served as an aircraft mechanic during the Korean and Vietnam wars.



He encouraged her to serve in the military, like many members of her family have done. So she followed him into the Air Force and became the first woman — as well as the first commissioned officer — in her family.

Even in failing health, he was there for her during an important milestone.

“Although he was sick, he performed my Silver Dollar Salute. It is the first person to salute you as an officer,” Scales said. “In exchange, I gave him a silver dollar as a symbol of my respect and gratitude.”

Later, Ferrell shared another important part of his life with her.

Sauce

When he died in 2013, he gave her an unexpected gift: the recipe to a specialty sauce that he created. It was the culmination of years of adjusting the recipe until he felt it was perfect. The secret sauce had become a staple at family meals.

“He didn’t leave me instructions on what to do with the recipe. I decided to have it bottled to share with the world,” she said.

She created her own company, Mutt’s Sauce LLC. More than 10 independent contractors in Ohio and Tennessee help run the company, and it is being sold in Spring Street Market in Cookeville. She hopes one day the sauce will become a household name.

In addition to her sauce business, the Scales works in the Pentagon as a data analyst in the Air Force Office of Small Business.

She joined the Air Force Reserves last year, but while she was on active duty, she was program manager of several platforms, including nuclear weapons security programs,

fighter aircraft, and small arms. She was also one of four Air Force Program managers who were called to help put out the massive 2008 wildfires in California.

Ms. Veteran America

As if she weren't busy enough, Scales is also in the middle of competing for the title of Ms. Veteran America.

This is no beauty pageant.

The competition is only open to women who have served in one of the branches of service, and if they have separated or retired, their service must be honorable. There is a talent competition and an interview, but rather than a pageant-wear competition, the ladies will have a "Pushup Princess" competition to see who can do the most pushups in two minutes. Competitors also have to be experts on military history of all branches, not just the one in which they served.

Her husband, Lt. Col. Michael Scales of the Air Force, showed her an article on the competition, but it was the mission of a nonprofit group that helps homeless female veterans that sealed the deal.

Each participant raises money for their favorite charity, and Scales chose this one.

Final Salute was founded by Army veteran Maj. Jas Boothe after her own remarkable comeback.

After serving in Iraq, Hurricane Katrina destroyed her home and all of her possessions. One month later, she was diagnosed with cancer. Then the Army downsized, eliminating her position after 13 years of service.

She ended up homeless for nearly six months. When Boothe finally got back on her feet again, which included beating her cancer diagnosis, she learned that she was not alone. There are an estimated 55,000 homeless women veterans in America.

In 2010, she launched what would become Final Salute.

"The nonprofit organization to provide safe housing for homeless women veterans and their children, a service not readily accessible to women veterans — the fastest growing population of the homeless," Scales said.

Scales is now one of 25 finalists who are going to the national competition on Oct. 9. Scales is fundraising for Final Salute at [www.crowdrise.com/charlyndas4mva2016](http://www.crowdrise.com/charlyndas4mva2016). As little as \$25 can house a female veteran and her child for a night through the organization.

Scales says she appreciates any support for the program that she can get through her hometown.

“I love my hometown. Many thanks to the village that raised me. In spite of all the accolades across my life, I’m proud to call myself a Tennessee country girl,” she said.

If she wins the competition, Scales will receive \$15,000 toward her education or vocation, along with a crown, sash, gown and the opportunity to travel to the Ms. Veteran American competition in 2017 to help crown that winner.

The public can keep up with the results of Ms. Veteran America at [www.msveteranamerica.com](http://www.msveteranamerica.com).

Follow Scales’ journey at [www.facebook.com/charlyndas4mva2016](http://www.facebook.com/charlyndas4mva2016) or on Twitter by following @charlys4mva2016.

\*See With Our Armed Forces at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>