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**Real-life fairy tale**

Carpenter Paul DiMeo first saw the dancer in 1984; he recently saw her again in Blacksburg.

By [Tonia Moxley](#)

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It was 1984. Paul DiMeo was in the rafters of some New York college, working one of his first jobs as a professional.

For the carpenter from Philly, lighting shows for the renowned Dance Theatre of Harlem was a beginning-of-the-career coup.

The troupe was performing a ballet classic, "The Firebird." Later the show would travel to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and eventually be broadcast on PBS.

That night in New York, one of DiMeo's jobs was to train a spotlight on the Princess of Unreal Beauty. He didn't know her real name.

The princess had fallen in love with a prince. But a villain, one Prince of Darkness, tried to thwart their romance with an army of monsters. And the magical and powerful Firebird had to save the day.

DiMeo, the carpenter, still has the playbill from that show. And the princess is still vivid in his mind as one of the best performances he saw in his long theater career.

"Oh, my word," the carpenter thought. "This woman is going to go places."

That night was special also for the princess. Few talented dancers ever perform professionally.

And of those few, fewer still are chosen to dance a role like the Princess of Unreal Beauty, a part made of scarves and flowing fabric and the grace of solo ballet.

Dancing that main character was one of the first times Carol Crawford Smith stepped into the spotlight of a principal role.

She did go places, performing on prominent stages across the world and on television.

The carpenter and the princess didn't meet that long-ago night in New York. And he didn't know what happened to her afterward.

After many triumphs, she took off her pointe shoes and started a family. She went to college and earned two degrees.