

Practice is paying off for Danae Husband, 18-year-old ballet dancer

By KYLIE SHAFFERKOETTER
Post Staff

DALLAS - Unlike most teenagers, Danae Husband does not know what it's like to sleep in late on weekends. But, you won't find her complaining, because she's up doing what she loves.

At the ripe age of 4 Danae discovered ballet. She can't quite explain why, but ballet instantly took precedence over all other forms of dance and sports. While many little girls were experimenting with a few different dance styles, such as tap and jazz, Danae knew she really wanted to learn ballet and ballet alone.

"I loved it instantly. I chose ballet over any sport every year. A lot of girls dropped out, but I just stayed with it," said the 18-year-old Dallas High School senior. "I liked that ballet was more classical and had more culture to it."

After 14 years of diligent practice, Danae performed in *Swan Lake* at the Darte Center for the Performing Arts at Wilkes University. She danced in the Charduz, a Hungarian dance, as a lead swan. "I loved it. I always wanted to do *Swan Lake*," she said.

Although performing in *Swan Lake* was a first for her, she's no stranger to *The Nutcracker*. Every fall, Ballet Northeast in Wilkes-Barre, where Danae has studied for the last eight years, puts on the holiday classic.

"*The Nutcracker* is the most exciting. The anticipation of finding out which part you're going to get each year is exciting," said Danae.

As dancers progress through



Danae Husband, center, and friends as they prepared to dance in *Swan Lake*.

different levels at Ballet Northeast, they get bigger and better roles. Danae has been in the first company, which is the top group, for three years. "As you

get older, you get more lead roles," she explained. "I've done almost every part in *The Nutcracker*."

When Danae is on stage she

wants the audience to see an elegant and graceful dancer. A large part of ballet involves creating the illusion that the dancer is ethereal, merely

"I loved it instantly. I chose ballet over any sport every year."

Danae Husband
Teenage ballet dancer

floating across the stage, touching down only when necessary.

Creating that illusion takes many hours of hard, and sometimes painful practice. Before productions, Danae tirelessly works to ensure that she delivers an impeccable performance. "I always hurt before shows," she admitted.

She practices four or five times a week after school and on the weekends. "Before a show we are there every night until we get it right."

Her mother, Sandra, knows when her daughter is in pain, even when the audience has no idea. "When she's on stage I know when her toes are hurting," she said. "I see beyond the beauty of each step because I know what it's taken her to get there."

Danae has shown her dedication to the delicate dance over and over. Once she broke three toes and had to stay away from dancing for six weeks. Only two years ago she was rushed to the hospital after a bad sprain during *The Nutcracker*.

Her mother said neither accident hindered her desire to continue and improve. "She never thought of giving up," said Mrs. Husband, proud of her daughter's strong will. It's obvious that a few

setbacks are worth the positive effects ballet has had on Danae's life. Both Danae and her mother credit ballet for teaching discipline, determination and dedication.

"It's given her tremendous focus in life. It's given her the ability to persevere and stay with something no matter how difficult it is," said Mrs. Husband. "I love the way it has given her such dimension. She's so happy."

Danae agrees. "Although it's tough around *The Nutcracker*, I feel it's worth it because I get so much diversity. It's taught me grace, discipline and self-confidence," she said.

Dancing also helps her escape from a bad day. "If I have a hard day at school, I can go to ballet and forget all my troubles." Plus, "It's a good time," she added.

Danae has eight best friends at Ballet Northeast with whom she has shared the last eight years. "One of the things that kept me in ballet was that I met great friends at Ballet Northeast. Although we go to different schools, we're bonded by ballet. We all have different lives, but we have ballet, which we love," said Danae.

She is thankful to her parents, Sandra and Frank; Peter and Kristen Degnan of Ballet Northeast and all of her friends for their support.

Danae, an honor student who was recently awarded the Creative Student Award at Dallas High School, plans to attend Westchester University in the fall. She wants to study biology and dance medicine, a specialized area of sports medicine.

Writer

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for her novels. In *Only You*, she writes about a man who comes back to his hometown and eats a pork barbecue at "Ralph's Place," which is based on the former Dixon's restaurant. Also, she had one character buy a Twin Kiss on a hot summer day. She was really writing about Mark II Family Restaurant.

"I use the Back Mountain in my books because I feel like I know the area," she said. Sometimes she has close friends like Barbara Cragle do research for her.

Despite the fact that she was interested in writing, she didn't think about it seriously until all four of her children were out of high school. "I loved English and excelled in creative writing. I've always loved making up stories. But, I never knew how to go about being an author," she explained.

One day while in the car with her daughter, Wendy, Laity said to her, "When I die, no one will even know I lived." This was an important moment for Laity, who signed up for writing workshops and classes shortly after she said those words. "From there she joined a critique group and became a member of Romance Writers of

"I've always loved making up stories. But, I never knew how to go about being an author."

Sally Laity
'Contemporary Christian' writer

America. "The critique group helped the most. None of us knew what we were doing," she said. They must have figured it out pretty fast because four of the five group members sold their books within one year.

Today she relies on three other writers to critique her stories before she feels they are finished. "It's amazing, just having another person's input really helps," she said.

She became interested in the romance genre when she saw that it could be done with an active element of faith, where the characters' relationship with God is an important part of their lives. In her novels there is no tawdry language or explicit

love scenes. Instead, she explores romance between characters who have God in their lives.

"The characters are never perfect. They overcome weakness and grow and improve," she said. "I always have a happy ending. In some of the mainstream romances you don't always get that."

Laity finds stories everywhere. "There are stories all around you, in the newspaper, in people you know. I try to think of a theme (dealing with a person's struggle)," she said.

She has dealt with her own struggle in finding her voice. "Writing has brought me out of the shell I was in. I tended to keep everything inside. Now I can express my true feelings," said Laity, who described herself as painfully shy before she started writing.

She is proud of her accomplishments and looks forward to the release of her next new love story, *I Do*, which is due out in May. "I don't feel as if I wasted the talent I was given. I wanted to use it for the Lord and I think He's helping me do that."

Scholarship perpetuates Paul Lauer's legacy

The memory of Paul H. Lauer was honored recently when a Kingston woman received a scholarship in his name. The scholarship is made possible through the support of the Cultural Heritage Council of NEPA and was awarded by the Luzerne County Community College (LCCC) Foundation. Meis Ghassan Ibrahim, an LCCC student, won the award.

Although Paul H. Lauer of Shavertown passed away in 1992, the benefits of his hard work continue to brighten the community. He served on many service organizations, including the Wilkes-Barre Jaycees, Knights of Columbus, The Art Advisory Board of LCCC and the Association for Retarded Citizens.

He founded the Luzerne County



PAUL H. LAUER

Ethnic Events Advisory Council, later named the Cultural Heritage Council of NEPA, which pioneered the original Luzerne County Holiday Fair and Luzerne County Folk Festival. The festival grew out of Lauer's work with Howard Fedrick and Frank Harrison on the Bicentennial Commission of 1976. The festival continued until 1995.

"He was an extraordinary father as well as an extraordinary artist who recognized the richness of diversity in our community, and strove throughout his life to both encourage and preserve it. The Folk Festival seemed to me to be the culmination of all of his efforts," said Marilyn Devlin Olenick of Tunkhannock, his daughter.

-Kylie Shafferkoetter

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