

## FOLAN: LESSONS LEARNED WORKING A SUMMER JOB

BY **PETER F. FOLAN**

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My father was part of the “Greatest Generation.” The son of Irish immigrants, my dad grew up during the Depression, joined the Navy, and served during World War II. Dedication, loyalty, fortitude, and hard work were many of the values preached in our household. My father believed those values were best learned through manual labor, in fact, the harder the better. For him, working a summer job was an imperative and invaluable experience.

I always worked in restaurants and met a treasure trove of hardcore, talented, and dedicated people. This unique education began for me at age 13, when I began washing dishes in the summer. This led to peeling potatoes and cleaning shrimp, and soon enough I was pulled away from the dishwasher to test my mettle “on the line.” I was taught quickly how to properly use a knife, sauté scallops, and grill steaks. However, nothing epitomizes a cult of pain more than tossing pizzas in front a wood-burning oven on a Saturday night in July.

The adrenaline rush, the grind, and hilarious conversations in the kitchen defined my adolescence. I befriended many hard-working people, who sent most of their paychecks home to support their families. This helped me at a young age appreciate what I had and taught me to stop worrying about what I didn't.

As a schoolteacher, I worked 10 additional summers for a restaurant entrepreneur. Dana towered over me, had a boxer's build, and lovingly picked on me with relentless zeal. He had the swagger of Anthony Bourdain, before there was



According to the author, parents should encourage their children to find summer jobs. They will meet mentors, and the lessons learned will last a lifetime. (Photo Metro Creative Services)

Bourdain, and the tenderness of a loving uncle. Dana encouraged me to work double and sometimes even triple shifts. He trusted and believed in me. He gave me real responsibilities and asked me to solve whatever problems arose, which they inevitably did. He helped me to understand that there are also moments in life when you can do everything right, and still fail, and have to start all over again. I will never forget those life lessons. I will also never forget that Dana came to both of my parents' funerals. I came of age in that restaurant and its indelible

mark is all over the person I've become.

These days, our children have many more options and activities available to them. Like my father, I advocate that everyone should spend summers scooping ice cream, washing dishes, busing tables, or tossing pizzas.

The self-reliance and responsibility gained from these real-world experiences can transform your life. I urge all parents to encourage their children to find summer jobs. They will meet mentors, and the lessons learned will last a lifetime.