

Sheraton Night Fever

Meet Charlie, the disco-dancing family man who entertains Sheraton patrons.

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THANK YOU...

FOR YOUR TIME..



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THE STUDENT VOICE

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Sheraton

Night

Forever

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If you're thinking of staying at the Sheraton Syracuse University Hotel, make sure you stay on the ninth floor, the club level. Charlie will be waiting for you with a full glass of wine, a cold beer, a welcoming smile, and a story or two.

Charlie Folino has worked as the bartender in the concierge level at the Syracuse University Hotel & Conference Center for a little more than six months, but most of the staff already know him by name. He has become a fixture, with guests returning to stay on the ninth floor especially to see him. He has earned 15 Star Cards-- letters that guests can send in commending an employee on his work-- in that short amount of time.

"I love working here," Folino says. "I get to meet people, and talk to them. I can make an impression on people, develop a relationship. When someone asks for me, it touches me."

You can find him on the ninth floor, wearing a button-down or polo style Ralph Lauren shirt. His warm brown eyes light up whenever any guest walks through the door, but more than any feature, you will know him by his broad, welcoming smile.

Folino is a transplant to Syracuse from Brooklyn, N.Y. Born in Bensonhurst in 1952, he remembers a time when dairy, meat, vegetables, and ice were delivered directly to his home. Folino lived with his mother, father, three sisters and a brother.

Especially close to his sister, Emily Maccone, who is only 18 months younger, Folino enjoyed typical Brooklyn pleasures.

"My sister and I were the closest," he says. "We hung out with the same friends, went to the same school."

Maccone agreed, and remembered a close childhood with her brother.

"He's my big brother; I followed him everywhere. And

when we got older, we had the same circle of friends. We still do, really," she says.

As a child, he enjoyed playing stickball and kickball with the neighborhood kids. As an adolescent, Folino hung out with friends, cut school to drink wine on the piers and beaches, had little parties, and listened to good music. In 1970, he graduated high school and moved to New York City.

Working two jobs to put himself through college, Folino attended the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. He put himself through college,

working as a bartender and in sales and window displays at Instant Pants, a Greenwich Village company that altered pants for free while the customer waited.

He graduated in 1972 and continued to work at Instant Pants. He describes New York in the 1970s as exactly as depicted in the movies and on TV.

"It was a party," he says. "Actually, it was sex, drugs, and alcohol. It was Studio 54."

Folino loved disco and frequently went to Studio 54.

Although he speaks of how he partied in the '70s, he said he was introverted and shy. "I was so quiet. I was nothing like who I am today,"

he said.

One of the happiest days of his life came for Folino in 1979. He had a commitment ceremony with his boyfriend, Dennis Licari, in white tuxedos, surrounded by 200 guests. The event was held in a bar in Greenwich Village and was a catered affair complete with a wedding cake and attendants.

"It was the happiest day of my life," Licari says. "We still feel the same way today that we did 25 years ago."

Betty Licari, Dennis's mother, has become a second mother to Folino, as Folino's own mother passed away in 1986. He calls her Mom, and she calls him her best friend.

"Charlie is meticulous, kind-hearted, and a good person," Betty Licari says. "I can't think of one bad thing to say about him."

Betty Licari said that Folino drives her to see her husband, who Folino calls Dad, in the nursing home, even if it means he will be a few minutes late to work.

"I love working here. I get to meet people, and talk to them. I can make an impression on people, develop a relationship. When someone asks for me, it touches me."

"He's always looking to help someone," she says. "That's the kind of person he is." Folino and Dennis Licari moved to Syracuse in 1987, wanting to be closer to Folino's two sisters who live here.

"I'm not moving ever again," Folino said. "I feel comfortable here. I finally feel like I've rooted myself."

Folino and Licari recently purchased a house on the north side of Syracuse, and Folino is enjoying applying his fashion background to decorating the new house.

"I'm a homebody," Folino says. "I love cleaning and organization, I love painting. I love finding something and making it look new."

Folino loves finding treasures, like furniture, at garage sales and cleaning and painting them. Family meals, especially at his favorite Syracuse eatery, Gentile's Restaurant, round out a few of his favorite things, including Top 40 music, murder mystery novels and warm and fuzzy comedies.

Family is important to Folino, and he enjoys very close relationships with his nine nieces and nephews.

"I'm their very cool Uncle Charlie," he says. "They come to talk with me when they have problems."

Folino enjoys an especially close relationship with his nephew, Joey Moscola.

"He is like a father figure to me. He basically raised me," Moscola says. "When I need advice or someone to talk to, I go to him."

Moscola said that Folino helped him find his long-lost biological father. Folino used the Internet to locate him, and accompanied Moscola to the meeting.

"I'm really grateful that he [Folino] helped," Moscola says. "He also came down with me to the city to meet him, which meant a whole lot to me."

He also loves when Folino tells him tales of crazy times at Studio 54. "He was John Travolta. He was the Disco Man," Moscola says with a laugh.

One of Dennis Licari's nieces, Kelli Anne McIntyre, feels the same way about Folino.

"I'm much closer to him than some of my biological uncles," McIntyre said. "He's an important part of our family. He's so open and easy to speak to, and I go to him with my problems."

Family is like a second skin to Folino and his strong relationship with Licari improves his devotion to strengthening family bonds.

"We are 'Dennis and Charlie'. We are one together, not separate entities," Licari says. "I wouldn't trade him for anything in the world."

His sister, Emily Maccone, calls Folino the life of the party.

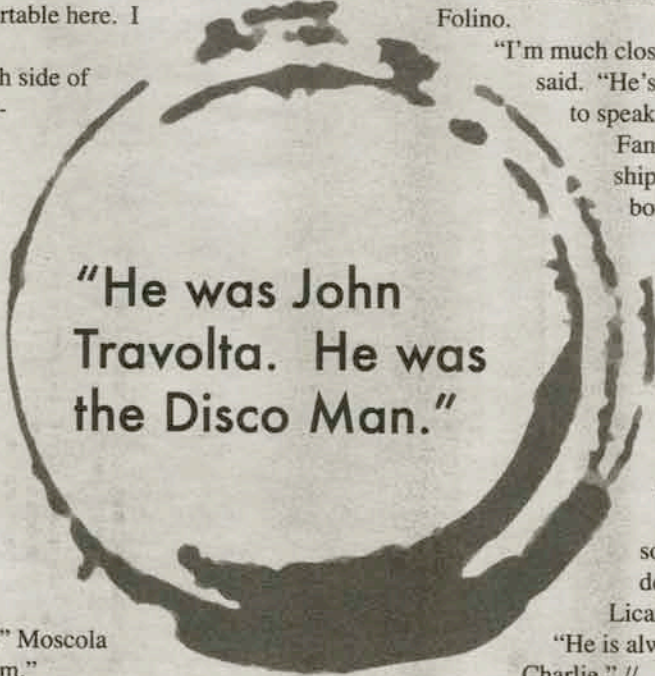
"He's a great dancer, and anyone he comes in contact with likes him. He's so easy to talk to," Maccone says.

Folino extends the same open ear and advice with relatives and strangers alike.

"I want to make something of my life. If you can touch someone, that's what life is about," Folino says. "I want to do right in life."

Licari says that this sincerity is the best thing about Folino.

"He is always the same person, he's always who he is. Charlie is Charlie." //



"He was John Travolta. He was the Disco Man."

STUDIO FOLINO

Charlie said that Studio 54 was all about the Disco Diva's—the sparkling ladies who sang catchy tunes you couldn't help but dance to! His favorites?

5. Donna Summer- "Love to Love You Baby"
4. Thelma Houston- "Don't Leave Me This Way"
3. Munich Machine- "A Whiter Shade of Pale"
2. Gloria Gaynor- "I Will Survive"

And the number one tune to shake your groove thing to in your leisure suit and platform shoes?

1. Van McCoy & the Soul City Symphony - "The Hustle"