



*By Maia Cargas / Photo by Steve Stoltzfus*

# Smoking a good cigar gives you time to think.

Mark Vergenes is spending that time thinking about his clients' financial wellbeing. Mark is President and Investment Executive of MIRUS Financial Partners. And he is a cigar aficionado.

MIRUS Financial Partners is located two blocks from the square in downtown Lancaster amidst a series of historical buildings dating back to the 18th century. MIRUS is distinct in many ways. From the modern art graciously adorning a well-designed office to an anti-wire house style of financial planning, this company stands out. Local artists, such as Gail Gray and Claire Giblin, display artwork in the office, creating a dual purpose space that is open for First Fridays as Art Gallery 110.

Mark enjoys the splashes of color and artistry in his office; the art is for sale by the artists and helps to create a forward thinking atmosphere in a typically conservative financial business work environment. A sizable acrylic on canvas by Claire entitled "Big Orange" hangs proudly behind the president's desk. This bold shade is used throughout the office in modest amounts. Orange is a color of change, which correlates with the shifting nature of the market and clients.

Mark confidently confides, "I work for the client." The client's best interest is first and foremost in the services provided at MIRUS. Retirement planning, financial planning, investment advisory, and estate and charitable giving planning are offered. It is clear that this local entrepreneur is invested in the wellbeing of his customers. Mark details the importance of charitable giving, "It is one of the most important things a person can do."

So where do the cigars enter the scene? A unique social network has been established through Mark's interest in cigars and the cigar connection with certain clients. Mark's office is found at 110 East King Street, but at lunch you can find him next door at Demuth Tobacco Shop enjoying a good cigar with local professionals. The resume of this tobacco shop is particularly impressive. Demuth is actually the seventh oldest continually operating business, at the same location, in the United States. Opened by Christopher Demuth in 1770, it is the oldest operating tobacco shop in the nation.

Mark's care and attention for clients' needs, his financial smarts, and his cigar knowledge have come together to form a successful financial planning firm. After more than ten years in the financial services industry, Mark founded MIRUS in 2006. His clients enjoy wisdom, handholding, and experience at MIRUS. If they also enjoy a good cigar, they may find themselves leaving a meeting at MIRUS with an Opus X or an Avo Uvezian Companero limited edition 2009.

The rare Opus X made by Arturo Fuente is the Stradivarius of cigars. As Mark puts it, "A cigar smoker can tell the difference." Davidoff, the maker of Avo Cigars, has its own fields and can tell you to the person when the cigar was rolled, who rolled it, and what day of the week it was formed. "There's something about an Avo to a cigar smoker... you know you're smoking an Avo or Davidoff; it just doesn't taste like anything else... it's extremely tasty."

The Companero is sold once a year yielding only 2000 boxes worldwide. "That's not for the golf course, that's for relaxing on the deck... enjoy yourself, do a nice little cut on the end, make sure its lit properly." Mark's office hosts his handy humidor, sitting proudly like a trophy with a very important job. What could be better for the discerning client than sound financial advice and planning paired with a thirty-six dollar cigar?

The collective appeal of cigars has created a fraternity of sorts among Mark, clients, and friends. Spending time with comrades in the

same crowd results in a special niche. As people get to know each other, a comfortable trust is developed. In such settings Mark is not selling; a more casual atmosphere is established. Social networking in the cigar store results in a more casual way of doing business.

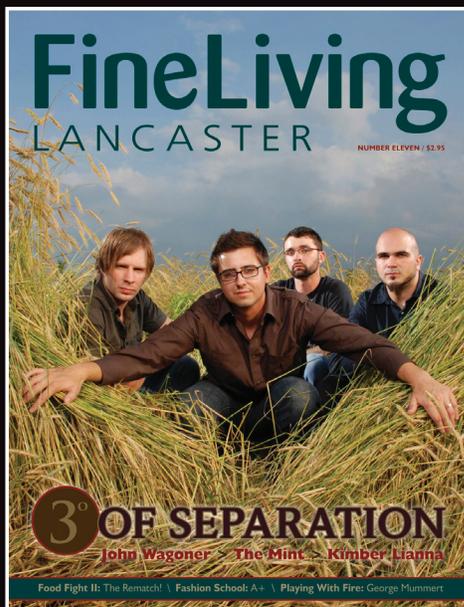
In addition to sustaining his financial planning career, Mark serves as an integral part of Lancaster's public life. His community involvement includes Chair of the Board for the Lancaster City Parking Authority, investment committee for the Lancaster Farmland Trust, Musser Park Civic Association member, and Vice President for Resurrection Catholic School Board. Amazingly enough, Mark manages to run a company, support local community boards, and spend time with his family. He is a forward thinking man with a solid work ethic, an extensive knowledge base, and a caring heart, certainly a recipe for success.

A cigar dinner concept is an example of a growing niche in networking. Mark graciously hosts a yearly cigar dinner in February. Clients and prospective clients enjoy hors d'oeuvres and a flavor for what MIRUS can do. A sampling of Mark's top-ten ideas is revealed, accompanied by a cigar selection. The cigar dinner has been held at local establishments such as Annie Bailey's Irish Pub and the Lancaster Malt Brewing Company. The dinner at LMB consisted of beer sampling as well as four flavorsome cigars. Last year the event was held on the second floor of Annie Bailey's. Attendees enjoyed twelve, fifteen, and eighteen-year-old single malt scotch from famous McGroff's and information on the uniqueness of each, for the mature palate. Cigars, as well as door prizes, were awarded, creating an evening of entertainment and education on the finer points of premium cigars and first-rate scotch. Valuable brand building and social networking result from these fun events.

Mark details that the golf course is always a good place to enjoy a cigar. The mid-day break smoke with friends is refreshing and full of a familiar camaraderie. However, relaxing on the deck for an evening smoke paired with a cold glass of Macallan single malt scotch whisky is a prime moment for really cherishing a fine cigar.

If you want to talk about your financial needs in a relaxed environment with someone who will listen and design a plan that works for you, go see Mark. If you happen to be a cigar enthusiast, your experience is bound to be even more satisfying. 🍷

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