

**“SAFE MONEY GUY” JIM FOX HAS FOCUSED
ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON
LIFETIME INCOME ANNUITIES FOR OVER TEN YEARS**

**The 25 Year Financial Services Veteran’s Chicagoland Based
Fox Financial Group Serves Hundreds of Clients With
“Integrity, Trust and Service” As Their #1 Goal**

Jim Fox’s wide range of talents, interests and passions have led him to play many unique roles throughout his life.

The Chicago native scored a basketball scholarship to Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois, played hoops for years, has run multiple marathons, plays golf regularly and served for several decades as a high school and collegiate basketball official. As the “music guy,” he plays guitar, mandolin and harmonica and has played in a traditional Irish band for years – including a performance before thousands of people at the Chicago Irish Festival in Grant Park. As a “charitable guy,” he works with Children’s Memorial Hospital, helping families who are struggling with terminally ill kids and other related issues.

But it’s in the financial services world where Fox has scored his most impressive shots and played his most influential gigs. Hundreds of satisfied clients of his Burr Ridge (Southwest Suburbs) based firm Fox Financial Group, Ltd. know him as the “Safe Money Guy,” dedicated in recent years to “Safe Money Management” via guaranteed lifetime income annuities, or more specifically, Fixed-Indexed Annuities with Lifetime Income Riders.

As a 16-year former registered representative of FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority), he witnessed and personally experienced the market crash in 2008, this became Fox’s company calling. Beyond his home region in Northern Illinois, he has clients in Missouri, New Mexico, Florida, Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin.

In addition to being quoted in upcoming articles in Forbes and Advisor Today in the March 2015 issues, Fox is contributing as co-author of world renowned professional development trainer Brian Tracy’s book *Uncommon*. His chapter is titled “This Is Not Your Grandmother’s Annuity,” subtitled “See How The Modern Annuity Has Changed.” He is also working on a soon to be published second book of his own whose title is *Why I Love Annuities and You Should Too*, subtitled *Why the Modern Annuity Should Be Part of Your Portfolio*.

Throughout the many changes in the industry since he launched his firm in the early 90s – and his shift in focus from being a full service Medicare supplemental insurance, long term care and life insurance brokerage to retirement planning - he has been dedicated to three pronged goals of Integrity, Trust and Service.

“I have always believed that if you’re not all three of those things, you will fail as a business,” he says. “In a largely referral based industry, earning people’s trust can only be achieved by doing business the right way.”

Fox’s extraordinary career has been marked by a strong entrepreneurial spirit, commitment to clients’ evolving needs and his embracing of powerful new opportunities that came his way. While working his first post-college job as a truck driver for a delivery company, someone there suggested his personality would be great for sales. With his natural gifts as a “people person,” who has been told more than a time or two that he’s like an open book, he quickly rose through the ranks and became sales manager over seeing a small staff.

Not long after, a longtime friend and fellow hoops player who had become a General Manager of Met Life put in a good word and application for Fox at the large insurance company. The flexible schedule, unlimited income potential and the chance to help people proved irresistible. By his mid-20s, just three years after becoming an insurance agent, Fox was a branch manager making six figures, with dozens of agents working under him.

“The money was great but I wasn’t happy,” he recalls. “I found myself working 60 hours a week and feeling angry trying to motivate people who were basically resistant to that. In the insurance business, you’re only as good as your next sale. People’s schedules were flexible and they took full advantage of that, sometimes taking the summer off and trying to hit the goal figures they set for themselves around the holidays. Met Life still uses my phrase, ‘It doesn’t take a year to do a year’s job.’ My agents seemed to prefer to wait as long as possible to hit those numbers.”

Believing he could be more effective dealing with people on a personal level than being a manager, and that it would be more rewarding working with clients on a one to one basis, Fox – along with his wife Sharon, who had worked for an attorney for years – launched Fox Financial Group, Ltd. 23 years ago. It was a mutual decision, predicated in part by their desire to have more flexibility to spend time with each other and their family. Though he had expertise in running a business, this involved an extraordinary leap of faith.

When he tells the story of building a successful family run business since then, he likes to use the phrase, “the proverbial rest is history.” But the dynamics its evolution and expansion demand a more detailed telling, starting with Sharon’s transition from simply serving as her husband’s assistant to wearing multiple hats, including handling payroll, answering phones, ordering supplies and overseeing the operation as office manager. The “group” element involves working with an accountant and an attorney who handle all the tax and legal work.

Though the name has remained the same, Fox Financial Group, Ltd. was a very different company in the beginning. Fox set it up as a full service insurance brokerage that also sold securities, mutual funds and variable products. In the early 2000s, he began adding more mutual funds and set up trusts, wills and variable universal life (VUL) insurance designed to help people avoid paying estate taxes as part of their estate planning.

When the market crashed in ’08, everything changed. Fox himself lost thousands in investments, and Sharon reminded him, “If we lost that much, how do you think your clients are feeling?” Realizing that his current business model was not sustainable with the markets down and so unstable, he immediately canceled his security license and began focusing exclusively on guaranteed lifetime income annuities.

Fox had actually been selling annuities among his large array of services since 1996, but the crash, along with emerging new realities of the American economy made his decision a no brainer. The country has 77 million baby boomers and most of these people do not have pensions. Large companies either don’t offer them anymore, or they were swallowed up in the crash. Instead they offer 401(k)s, and many retirees are forced to live off these and their monthly Social Security checks.

“Almost everybody lost something in 2008-09,” he says, “and even if somewhere across the board your portfolio made a little money, it lost it somewhere else, whether from real estate depreciation, a 401(k), personal IRA or mutual fund. With everyone taking a hit, it was time to focus on guarantees and no risk, safe investments.”

Incredibly, or from another perspective, not surprisingly, when Fox changed the core principle of what the company became, business and clientele quickly doubled. For the past six

years, his focal point has been telling new prospective clients – referrals and leads both – about exciting options for retirement planning. As before, these include estate planning, trusts and wills and long term care insurance to protect them later should they become incapacitated.

Even better, he worked with them on personalized strategies to create a stream of guaranteed lifetime income to help offset their pensions. He put clients into indexed annuities that cannot go down. He explains that in the worst case scenario, they might earn zero. “I love the phrase ‘Zero is Hero’,” Fox says. “Because if it made zero, that means had you had that same amount in the market you would have lost money. It’s okay if it flattens. Another analogy I make is that it’s like a staircase that can only go up. Each time you go up a rung, you cannot go backwards down the stairs because we lock in the rates every year on the anniversary of the day you took it out.”

Fox couples that sense of safety and security with a lifetime guarantee of income, which happens in an unbelievable way for a husband and wife. When Fox puts together his plans, they decide how they want their income to stream in, so that if one of the spouses lives to be 105 years old, the survivor would still get the same monthly check. It comes every month regardless of age. Fox is sure to tell clients that he and Sharon personally have four of these plans, and he’s not shy about showing them his statements.

“It’s like a pension,” he says. “We’ll move their 401(k)s and IRAs they have been building and roll them over into something safe and guaranteed. Whether the market goes up or down, or whether you live to be 105, they cover both ends of the spectrum. I tell them that now when you go out to your mailbox to pick up your Social Security check, you get two checks.”

Fox has been in the business long enough to know that many people come in needing education on the difference between variable and indexed annuities – and believes that any negative perception that annuities has is based on the variable ones, whose fortunes are tied to the volatility of the stock market and mutual funds. These are expensive, fee-laden products with a death benefit that can lose principle if the funds go down. With indexed annuities, there is no risk, and with the education he provides comes peace of mind.

“The easiest way to sum it up is to tell them that their money goes into an indexed account tied to the S&P 500, or similar indices, i.e. NASDAQ and Dow Jones, so that regardless of market fluctuation, they cannot go down except for withdrawals,” he says. “There are liquidity features which allow for withdrawals without penalties. There are only penalties for what we call ‘early surrender,’ so we advise clients not to cash their annuities in.”

Many years after working with a behemoth like Met Life, Fox sees a great advantage to being an independent broker licensed with 50 different companies – a position which allows him to fit products based on a client’s particular need rather than being captive to a large company’s sales quota, and the company’s certain plans.

“I have a wide array of different companies to work with as a gauge to the client’s liquidity needs and beneficiary income needs. I have every potential client assist me, filling out a questionnaire, and from their responses I will create a particular plan based on those needs,” he says. “More than ever these days, I am running into people who have problems based on their 401(k) and IRA, which have a required minimum distribution (RMD) age of 70 1/2. When these clients take their mandatory withdrawal, they often want the money to go to their beneficiaries. The problem they have is wanting money to go to their kids but having to withdraw some of it so they’re not penalized. I work on plans that ensure that even when they take their RMD, there will still be money to be inherited by their heirs.”

In the upcoming Advisor Today article, Fox is quoted relaying the words of one of his grateful clients. “This husband and wife were in one of our meetings holding hands as I told them how their guaranteed lifetime income plan would work and what their monthly income would be,” he says. “The husband became all teary eyed and said, ‘Jim, how can we ever repay you?’ To me, right there, that’s everything. That’s why I do what I do. It’s truly rewarding being able to help people, and it’s an amazing opportunity that I could never have had being a manager at a big insurance firm. That man’s gratitude is the reason I left and went out on my own.”