

Havana Tranquility a cigar lover's dream

People seem to enjoy their favorite pastimes more when shared with others of the same ilk. Why else would people leave their comfortable homes to flock to bars and watch football games? Wine, craft beer, food, crafts, hobbies and athletic endeavors all seem more enjoyable in the company of your mates.

That's also true of cigars, a centuries-old tradition that has bred a large corps of avid and knowledgeable fans who can discuss wrapper, binder, filler, shape, bouquet and ring size much like an oenophile dissects a wine.

Unbeknownst to most residents, Punta Gorda has just such a place for cigar-lovers to gather — Havana Tranquility. Located in its own attractive building at 25139 E. Marion Ave., you can't miss the large sign next to the charming terracotta-colored house surrounded by tropical vegetation.



HERALD PHOTO BY GORDON BOWER

The humidor at Havana Tranquility has 500 facings (open boxes) of top quality cigars, all attractively displayed.



Gordon Bower
Punta Gordy

Gordon Bower is a freelance writer and photographer. Contact him at glbower@comcast.net.

Dr. Emil Dameff, a cigar lover for several decades, spared no expense in creating one of the most luxuriously appointed private cigar clubs in the area. Even better, it has a smoke shop with an unbelievable selection of hard-to-find fine cigars that is open to the public seven days a week.

Dameff, a longtime Florida resident and a medical doctor at Bayfront Health Punta Gorda, first fell in love with cigars in the early 1990s while on a vacation cruise with his wife. In the ensuing years, he became a serious collector and a charter member of Ron Andrews' Olde Punta Gorda Cigar VIP club on Wood Street.

After Andrews sold his place in 2011, he and his club members, including Dameff, got together and decided to find another place where they could enjoy their favorite smokes.

Andrews, now the manager of Havana Tranquility, said, "We tried to make it happen. About a year ago, we decided to buy a building but couldn't get the financing."

That's when Dameff stepped forward in a big way.

He said, "I built myself a cigar room as a separate house on my property, and the guys would come over to smoke. That's when the seed of this idea came up. I wanted to create a place that was my vision and different than anything else in this area."

He purchased the East Marion property and a lot next door for future expansion, and then set about making his dream a reality, putting to use his own creativity, sense of taste and wisdom gained in numerous visits to other world-class cigar clubs.

The name of the club is well-chosen, a fact that becomes apparent on arrival. The outside has a Key West/Caribbean look to it, and tropical plants and palms are abundant. That's the "Havana" part of the name. Press your finger on the biometric entry system on the left door, and the sound of traffic on East Marion disappears as you walk into a tranquil cigar oasis.

He said, "I wanted an old-world concept, not just a Cuban look, but something with a Caribbean, Churchillian, old-British feel. Something with a lot of dark wood that Winston Churchill would feel



HERALD PHOTO BY GORDON BOWER

LEFT: Dr. Emil Dameff has built a cigar emporium called Havana Tranquility on East Marion Avenue. It features a Key West-look on the outside, a luxurious club area and a huge humidor filled with high-end cigars available to the public.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY DR. EMIL DAMEFF

RIGHT: This unusual granite used throughout Havana Tranquility and Diane Kole's unusual cigar wrapper 3-D faux painting are two distinctive features of Havana Tranquility.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Owner Dr. Emil Dameff works long hours but often finds time to sneak a smoke at his cigar emporium, Havana Tranquility.

comfortable having a cabinet meeting in." The interior is built around a unique slab of granite, which is used throughout the club area, in the serpentine-shaped bar, countertop, window boxes and table-tops. The light fixtures, accessories and furniture reinforce an aura of luxury and tranquility, and the walls add yet another layer of refinement.

In the smoking department, no stone was left unturned.

Members have 24-hour access to their club through the biometric entry system on the left side door, so they can indulge on their own schedule. There's a fridge and

bar (BYOB), coffee and espresso, a storage locker and an honor humidor containing a wide selection of cigars.

Custom-made leather chairs are filled with compartments for cigars and accessories, while twin high-def TVs, one a 70-incher, are available for viewing at appropriately tranquil volume levels.

In the public area, the main humidor and top-of-the-line smoking accessories are accessible to members and cigar shoppers who drop by. Outside is a mister-cooled area for dominoes, a game highly popular with cigar lovers, especially in Latin America.

However luxurious and well-planned, cigars are the main event at any club. Dameff said, "We have over 40 vendors and 500 different facings (open boxes) in a range from \$4.50 to \$95 a cigar. We want to provide enough variety so people can find something to their liking."

Variety there is in the form of every ring size, shape, length and wrapper, many of them from small, highly respected makers that are almost impossible for a cigar lover to ever lay eyes on. All are available to the public at MSRP, with another 15 percent off for club members. The top-of-the-line cigar accessories, like lighters, humidors and cases, come from companies like S.T. DuPont and Brizard — perfect for gifts.

For those who need guidance, Dameff, Thomas and the rest of the staff are certified tobacconists, knowledgeable on all the brands and able to give good advice.

Shop hours are from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays; 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturdays; and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays. Call 941-347-8177 for more information.



HERALD PHOTO BY GORDON BOWER

LEFT: Havana Tranquility manager Ron Andrews, staff member Tom Burwell and owner Dr. Emil Dameff are proud of the selection in the enormous humidor.

FALL INTO SAVINGS!

Fridays 1-6 PM
Saturdays 10 AM-4 PM

Men & Women
Business • Casual • Church Clothing
Regular Priced Clothing
\$1-\$3 ~ Shoes \$2

Tops • Bottoms • Dresses • Jeans • Sets
Church Hats • Pocketbooks • Shoes

All Boutique Clothing \$5

GOD'S PRECIOUS GIFTS, Inc.
Thrifty Treasures
418 E. Virginia Ave., Punta Gorda
iamgpgi@live.com

"Helping Families Stretch Their Budgets."
GPGL is a 501(c)3 grassroots Trabue-Woods organization
Helping individuals grow from hardship to self-sustainment

Pineapple Storage
A "SAFE AND SECURE" PLACE
\$60 Outdoor Lot (Any Size*)

NO CONTRACT REQUIRED!

- Cannot be combined with any other coupon •
- New Customers Only •
- Expires 12-15-14 • plus applicable taxes •

25477 Marion Ave. in Punta Gorda
on corner of Marion Ave. & Florida St.
(941) 505-0626
www.PineappleStorage.com

Thomas Quigley, M.D.
Board Certified Eye-Physician & Surgeon

2529 TAMIAMI TRAIL
PUNTA GORDA
941-639-2020

20600 VETERANS BLVD.
PORT CHARLOTTE
941-766-7474

330 NORTH BREVARD
(NEXT TO FARM CREDIT)
ARCADIA
863-993-2020

Eye Health

FREE EYE EXAM FOR NEW PATIENTS

complete medical exam with one of our board certified eye doctors includes prescription for eyeglasses, and tests for cataracts, glaucoma and other eye diseases. Offer applies to new patients 59 years and older.

Offer Does Not Apply To Freedom And Optimum Health Plan Participants.
Coupon Expires 11/16/2014

No Hidden Charges: It is our policy that the patient and or any other person responsible for payment or be reimbursed by payment of any other service, administration or treatment which is performed as a result of reimbursement within 72 hours of responding to the advertisement for the free, discounted fee or reduced fee service, examination or treatment. Offer does not apply to American managed insurance plans including Freedom, Optimum and some Health Maintenance Organizations. Code: CS001

www.doctorquigley.com