



August 2025

Dear Fellow Investors,

The Partners Fund returned 12%¹ in the second quarter, bringing YTD returns to +8.5%.

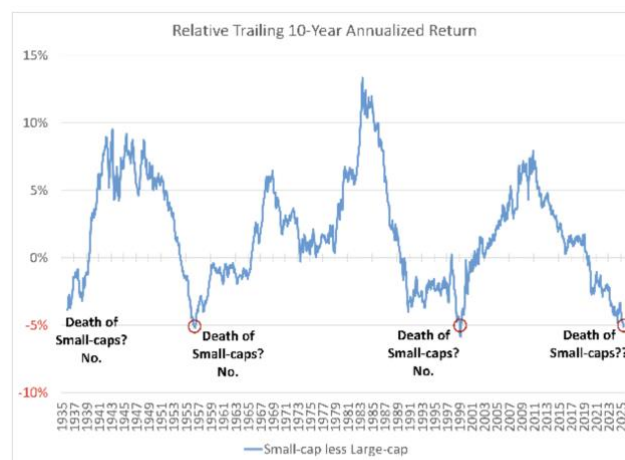
As discussed in the Q1 letter ([link](#)), significant appreciation of concentrated holdings in three of the underlying funds contributed to the positive returns this quarter including an SPV invested in the Portuguese company CTT and Arquitos' investment in Enterprise Diversified (ENDI).

The criteria for the managers in whom we are invested are as follows:

- One-person investment committee
- Concentrated holdings
- Reasonable amounts of capital (AUM)
- Significant personal investments (“skin in the game”)
- Original thinking
- Mindset: Getting rich is not the point

The criteria for “Original thinking” means that our managers will tend to gravitate away from investing in the largest companies which has been a headwind to performance for the fund. While YTD performance is ahead of both the Russell 2000 and the S&P 500, it is not because smaller companies are “in favor”. The market has been driven by a few large cap (and widely held) companies – none of which we own.

Furey Research Group recently published a thought piece titled “Small-Caps Probing Rarely Seen Long-Term Relative Return Depths” with the following chart.



Source: FRP, FactSet, Morningstar; as of 6/30/25; Small-cap employs CRSP 6-8 Market Cap Decile Index returns from 1926 to June 2001 and CRSP Small Cap Index returns from July 2001 to present; Large-cap employs S&P 500 returns for all periods

¹ See end notes for a description of this net performance.



As the chart indicates, the relative 10-year trailing returns for the Russell 2000 are near their trough relative to the S&P 500. There have been three similar troughs for the relative long-term returns of small-cap companies vs. large-cap companies – which each time have been met with a multi-year reversal of the trend to the benefit of small companies.

Nobody knows if the tide will turn again. Currently, many of the largest companies in the world are defying the law of large numbers. For example, Microsoft, posted 18% revenue growth last quarter adding over \$11 billion in revenue. Very impressive for a 50-year-old company on an enormous revenue base.

For Microsoft to double from here, it will need to add another \$4 trillion in market capitalization and with its current P/E multiple of 38 it may not get a lot of multiple expansion. Microsoft is an incredible company, but time will tell if it is an incredible stock over the next 5 or 10 years.

In this letter, I want to look at a company at the opposite end of the market cap spectrum from Microsoft - Argent Industrial. We all have exposure to Argent through the Partners Fund. It is a holding of Desert Lion, one of our managers we are invested in that focuses on South African listed companies.

Argent Industrial has 20 subsidiaries in sectors ranging from steel fabrication to the manufacturing of security barriers, specialty equipment, branded consumer and industrial goods, and fuel-storage and refueling systems. The recent results have been quite impressive.

As Desert Lion's Rudi van Niekerk wrote

"Over the past six years, EPS has compounded at 30% per annum. We see another year of strong EPS growth ahead, driven by organic expansion on the back of robust order books, disposal of a low-return non-core division, resumed share buybacks, and the full-year inclusion of recent acquisitions."

The capital allocation at Argent has been executed by Rhys Summerton who manages Milkwood Capital and has shown a knack for turnarounds and activism. Through a series of divestments and acquisitions he has made Argent less cyclical and less dependent on the South African economy. In fact, less than 22% of revenues are now derived from South Africa – the vast majority are from the US and Europe. So while Argent is listed in South Africa their operations are primarily outside of South Africa.

As detailed in the Desert Lion letter,

"This is a textbook mispricing of a high-quality, globally diversified, cash-generating company with excellent capital allocation driving returns—a classic case of a global business trading at South African discounts. We believe the discount won't last forever, and until it closes, we are content to collect outsized earnings yields."



Argent is trading at less than 6X Desert Lion's estimated earnings and closer to 4X if you back out the excess cash. A modest increase in P/E ratio from 6X to 9X (or from 4X to 7X backing out cash) would yield a 50% increase in share price.

Conversely, even without multiple expansion, just holding the current low multiples, IF trends continue for revenue and earnings growth and share count decline from buybacks, share price mathematically has to go up. Given the depressed valuations of smaller companies like Argent, there are many ways to win.

I want exposure to companies like Argent which are growing, have high insider ownership, declining share counts, and strong balance sheets. What it lacks in name recognition, it can make up for in earnings per share growth.

This time may not be different, but if the tide turns on relative returns between small and large-cap companies to the benefit of small companies, I believe that The Partners Fund should benefit disproportionately. As this past quarter showed, we do not need the turn to happen, but it would provide a tailwind from which we have not yet benefited.

I end each letter saying our fund of funds is going to be different. It will be smaller, the underlying holdings will be more esoteric, and I hope the managers will continue to collaborate more over time. I believe that it will be "good different," but only time will tell. Thank you for joining me on this journey. I will work hard to grow your family's capital alongside mine.

Sincerely,

Scott



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