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The PBJ Interview: Elected mayor 30 years ago, Bud Clark changed the face of Portland



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It's tough to consider Portland in 1984 without evoking the name of [Bud Clark](#).

He, of course, is the man who in one seemingly swift motion went from tavern owner — he ran the Goose Hollow Inn, which is still a Portland West End landmark — to Portland's mayor. His candidacy embodied the notion of the outsider politician who rode support from a grassroots constituency into office.

Clark also became a symbol of the city's "what the heck" attitude, at least partly due to his most-viewed action. He's the man flashing a Southwest Fifth Avenue statue in the universally distributed poster that's captioned "Expose Yourself to Art." Clark and photographer [Mike Ryerson](#) actually took the shot several years before Clark took office.

After his term, Clark became an advocate for homeless services. He was honored for his time on the Transition Projects Inc. board when the group named a prominent downtown housing center, dubbed the [Bud Clark Commons](#), after him.

We caught up with Clark this week by phone as he made his way to Boise, where he's visiting friends.

When I say 1984, what's the first thing that comes to your mind? That's when we had the campaign. And we're going to celebrate it on May 19 (at McMenamin's Kennedy School, in Northeast Portland). It'll give me a chance to thank all the people who elected me.

You've been a bit shy about doing public appearances for the past few years.

Does this party mean you're getting back into the public eye? No, not at all. This will be putting the attention on all the people who got me elected. You're right: I was really embarrassed that they named the building (the [Bud Clark Commons](#)) after me. They usually wait and do that type of thing a little bit later. But it's a great honor.

What else do you remember from 30 years ago? The big thing was that no one was going to run against (the two-term then-Mayor) Frank Ivancie. But a couple of people (including longtime Portland politician Gretchen Kafoury) asked me to run. I felt he could be beat, but a lot of people thought I'd announced too late. I hadn't raised any money, and all of our volunteer (operations) were run out of the Goose Hollow Inn. Eventually, my volunteers were (campaigning) all over the city. The whole thing was a miracle, really.

What do you remember about talking to businesses during your campaign? They were up for voting out Ivancie. I had vice presidents from banks tell me they were behind me, and I guess they were as far as I know. The bigger businesses were very skeptical during the campaign, but a lot said afterward they voted for me. Then again, people always say that after the election. (Developer) [Bob Scanlan](#) (and others) arranged to raise money for me, so they were behind me. We had the Mayor's Ball after the election, it was a big dinner at the Hilton, and that paid for the campaign.

Once you took office, did you have a good relationship with business? With small businesses, yes. I went out to Southeast and talked to a business owner who said he'd never seen anyone campaigning out on Foster Road. The same thing happened on Sandy Boulevard.

How has the city government's relationships with businesses changed in the last 30 years? It's definitely changed. We were in a recession then, which was another reason I ran for mayor . . . the lumber mills were consolidating, we had a big homeless problem. There were people up here who'd been hoping to spend their lives working in lumber mills and logging, but they had to close up their homes and come to Portland. It was a serious thing. We also have the huge electronics industry now. We had **Tektronix** back then, but not much more.

I'm not sure if you're tired about talking about the poster . . . I don't get any money out of it. That was something I did before I ran for mayor . . . I was walking with my accountants downtown and I was wearing that coat, and people were looking at me weird. We came up to the statue and [Mike Ryerson](#) (of the Northwest Examiner) said, "Why don't you flash her?" He took four or five pictures. I was wearing a T-shirt, but you can't see that in the picture. Mike said, let's put that in the paper, and put a \$25 prize on it to whoever could put a caption on there. There were 350 entries. Three people came up with "Expose Yourself to Art."

Before I'd run for office, it sold a quarter of a million copies.

So you had a bit of a run leading up to 1984. I was like the Lone Ranger, coming off the range to fix the city. I was on the Johnny Carson show, and that put Portland on the map. Remember, at the time there was still the visage of (Gov. [Tom McCall](#)) saying, "Come

to (Oregon) but don't stay." My goal was to kill that thing, get rid of it and make sure people came to Portland and stayed.

What are you up to these days? Are you still working at the tavern? I'm not spending time at the tavern. I don't drink that much. My granddaughter is running it.

You doing anything on the civic front? I'm on the Transition Projects Inc. board. But this is my last term there. (He laughs.) I guess that's why we now have the [Bud Clark Commons](#).