As with any non-career politicians who suddenly find themselves in positions of power, Clark took a little while to learn the ropes of his new job, but he eventually became a reasonably good mayor. Occasionally, however, his tendency towards crude language got him into trouble, and he managed to alienate a number of his constituents as a consequence. That did not prevent his reelection, and in retrospect he is considered to be a successful leader who did a lot to boost the image of the city of Portland.

Although somewhat heavyset he often biked to his office, frequently in the rain and always with a fresh rose in the label of his jacket (Portland is known as The Rose City and one of the city's most popular attractions is the rose test gardens). Clark was well known for his sense of humor and love for the city of Portland. A friend of mine recalled running into Mayor Clark on the street one day, and to her greeting he responded with a hearty "Hello, Citizen!" His policy for encouraging casual dress at work (and love of lederhosen) has been linked to and may be responsible for the "casual Friday" custom today.

While many people today may not have heard of Clark, quite a number have actually seen him without realizing who he was. Prior to becoming mayor, he created the famous and funny (but perhaps not especially politically correct) poster of a guy in a raincoat flashing a statue, with the caption "Expose yourself to Art!"

Clark left office at the end of 1992. In 1997 he was master of ceremonies at the "Alice B. Toeclips" awards put on by the Bicycle Transportation Alliance to honor promoters of bicycling in Oregon, and in 1999 was the recipient of the first "Bud Clark" award from the same organization. An avid canoeist, in 1997 he badly injured his left leg in a fall onto a sagebrush stump while on a trip down the Owyhee River in Idaho. Sigrid, his wife of 35 years and violinist for the Oregon Symphony, died in February of 2000.

Although he has been out of office for a number of years now, Bud Clark's influence on the city of Portland still remains. At the very least, he has been one of Oregon's more colorful characters, from a state well known for producing unique individuals!