

Paul Clark, DDS – A Dentist Story

As we meet with Dr. Paul Clark, it is in the middle of the week, shortly before 10:00 AM. Dr. Clark takes our call from his favorite place – on his patio overlooking the lake. The very place he worked his whole life to have.

After graduating from Case Western Reserve University in 1982, Dr. Clark started a practice of his own in 1983. He purchased a dental office from a retiring dentist who maintained an office in that location for the previous fifty years. It was a modest office, with a residence above where Dr. Clark lived. But it was Dr. Clark's practice, and that is all that mattered. He brought his first daughter home to this practice and residence, and it is here where he really learned what it takes to start a dental office from scratch.

"It was an interesting and fun time," commented Dr. Clark. "I learned how to take care of things. In fact, I learned how to take care of everything! I cut the grass, performed maintenance on my building, changed the light bulbs, I really did everything. It was just what you did in those days." He did have a little family help though. "My father stenciled and painted my first dentist office sign, said Dr. Clark. "How great is that?"

Five years later, Dr. Clark moved to a new office. He would move a few times over his career, but never far from that first location.

Dr. Clark has seen a lot of changes over his career, especially with technology. "I originally started out using a pegboard for my ledger," said Dr. Clark. "We're talking carbon copy sheets! The patient gets one, and I get one. My payroll was completely manual. And of course I did my own taxes."

Early to embrace computers, Dr. Clark was running a UNIX system by the late 1980s. "That really revolutionized how we handled insurance and payroll," said Dr. Clark. "No more carbon paper!" As time moved forward, so did Dr. Clark, growing his practice, and eventually starting to think about his retirement options. "About 6 years ago, I bought this great lake property for me and my wife. It was everything we ever wanted," said Dr. Clark. "But it meant I really needed to get the most out of my practice."

To prepare for the sale of his office, Dr. Clark worked with his accountant to put together a package promoting it. At

first it seemed selling might not be as easy as he thought. "One potential buyer wanted to re-make me in their own image," said Dr. Clark. "After practicing over 30 years, I wasn't interested in that. I wanted to keep being me, and keep doing what I was doing."

"When Midwest Dental came along, they were so transparent and forthcoming," said Dr. Clark. "I was impressed with that. And then when the offer came back, everything really fell into place with my retirement plan. I continued to practice for a time, and I was encouraged to do it my way."

Today, Dr. Clark is recently retired and thoroughly enjoying his lake place. "I go paddle boarding in the morning and for the first time I have a boat and jet ski," said Dr. Clark. "It's a dream come true."



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