

Dr. Wayne Calrk outside Huntington Recovery Center in Salinas

History Corner:
Dr. Wayne Clark Remembers Martin Dodd's Legacy

Written by Jorge Rubio

For this edition of History Corner, we spoke with Dr. Wayne Clark, a longtime behavioral health leader whose career has spanned decades of work in substance use treatment, mental health, and recovery services. Through his memories, we gain insight into the early days of Sun Street Centers and the vision of founder **Martin Dodd**.

Dr. Clark's journey into the field began during the Vietnam War when he was assigned to a state hospital in Illinois. Given the choice between two departments, he chose to work in the alcohol unit, helping individuals whose lives had been impacted by alcohol use. After several years, he moved to California and continued that work at a hospital in the County of San Francisco.

"At first it was just alcohol, but then the drug scene blew up in the 70s and 80s."

As the need for services grew, so did Dr. Clark's involvement in public health and behavioral health programs. He eventually became **Monterey County's Alcohol Program Administrator** and later served as **Behavioral Health Director**.

His first meeting with Martin Dodd took place in the **1980s** at a statewide DUI conference held in Asilomar. Dr. Clark was representing San Francisco County while Martin was there on behalf of Sun Street Centers' DUI program. Sitting on a patio overlooking Monterey Bay, the two began discussing recovery, treatment, housing, and the challenges people face after completing a program.

At the time, Dr. Clark shared an innovative San Francisco housing initiative known as an "**Island of Sobriety**," designed to provide safe, sober housing for individuals leaving treatment programs. Martin immediately connected with the concept because he was already thinking about how to support people beyond residential treatment.

"Initially, the islands of sobriety caught on. He had something like that, he had a couple of apartments after you graduated from Sun Street Centers."

Looking back, Dr. Clark says that was always the goal: creating supportive environments where people could continue **building healthy lives** after treatment. Seeing Sun Street Centers grow over the years, he believes that original vision has become a reality.

What stood out most about Martin was his ability to think beyond the needs of the moment and focus on what recovery could be.

"He was philosophical and would have big ideas about sometimes somethings that were narrow but that was good because it really added to getting something going and started. He was very important in how the recovery community acted politically in the State of California."

When Dr. Clark became Monterey County's Behavioral Health Director in 2002, one of the first people to welcome him was Martin. Having someone in a leadership position who understood substance use treatment was important to him, and it further strengthened the relationship between behavioral health services and community-based recovery programs.

Back then, Sun Street Centers looked very different than it does today. According to Dr. Clark, Sun Street Centers primary offered the **DUI program**, the **Salinas Residential Program**, and **sober living apartments** across the street from the residential program. Yet even in those early years, Martin believed recovery support should extend far beyond a single program.

He understood that recovery involved families and communities as much as individuals. Successes should be celebrated together, and setbacks should be met with support rather than judgment.

Dr. Clark also remembers a time when collaboration between organizations was much harder to achieve. Agencies often worked independently, making it difficult to create coordinated systems of care. That's one of the reasons he is so proud of what Sun Street Centers has become.

"I am clearly proud of what has been done and what it is now in a place like this. It was not envisioned at first and to have that happen and to get the public and private partnerships - that's all terrific."

When asked what Martin would be most proud of today, Dr. Clark points to the **Huntington Recovery Center** and the expansion of services throughout the community. To him, those accomplishments represent the fulfillment of ideas that Martin had been championing from the start. This is what Dr. Clark had to say when describing Martin Dodd.

"He had leadership qualities that you can write a book about it. He would be the kind of person who would try to help others be leaders. For this community he made an enormous contribution and his legacy is still here."

For Dr. Clark, the story of Sun Street Centers is a story of vision and belief in the power of recovery. What began as a handful of programs and a commitment to helping people rebuild their lives has grown into a network of support for men, women, and families throughout the tri-county area. Looking back on those early conversations about recovery, housing, and community support, it's clear that many of the ideas Martin Dodd championed decades ago continue to shape the organization today. His vision lives on in the services provided, the partnerships built, and the thousands of lives touched along the way.



