



Fred McCardell in 1948 (Elizabeth McCardell)

Frederick McCardell (1906-2007) was born 23 July 1906 in Sydney. In a career summary celebrating the 30th anniversary of his membership of the Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators Australia, Fred noted the significant age differences for his parents: *'My father was born in 1825 and my mother in 1880. I came in 1906. (No misprints here!)*' Records in NSW confirm the marriage of James F. McCardell and Arabella B.C. Jiffkins in 1901, and the death in 1916 of 92 year old James F. McCardell at Annandale, slightly at odds with a birth in 1825. James reputedly had families in New Zealand, Canada and England, and a number of offspring by those marriages. Family recollections also include that he was an architectural draftsman, a talented church organist and brass band conductor, a fine illustrator (with a book on exotic birds of the world that he illustrated), and artist.

Cadet records note that in 1920, schoolboy Fred was resident at 41 Young Street in Annandale, Sydney. Fred had two brothers, James Francis born in 1903; and Jack Lawrence born in 1911 – with Jack's next of kin listed as Beatrice McCardell of 46 Young Street Annandale in 1929. Jack contracted chronic colitis at an early age, apparently it was an untreatable illness in those days, except by increasingly higher doses of morphine, and he suicided by taking an overdose in 1951. Beatrice died in 1963, and James in 1983 by suicide.

At 16 years old, Fred chose architectural drafting as an occupation, and after some time in an architect's office he worked with Wunderlich Ltd in Sydney, a firm making building materials. He enrolled to study architecture at Sydney

Technical College (STC) from 1924. As a draftsman working with architect Henry E. White, Fred McCardell produced drawings for decorative doors and balustrading at Sydney's State Theatre. In 1928 he graduated with an architecture diploma from Sydney Tech; fellow graduates of the year included Keith Giraud and Hedley Carr. Registered with the NSW Board of Architects in 1929, McCardell was employed by the Commonwealth Government in Sydney and Canberra under E.H. Henderson, Principal Architect and designer of the National Library in Canberra, with Fred contributing the perspective drawings of this library, and other projects.



McCardell's drawing of the National Library in Canberra (NLA PIC6172 LOC Drawer PIC 6172)

In 1931 Fred was married to Marjorie Mary Matthews (c.1896-1969) – exam results show that Marjorie was in the same class as Fred at STC. Two streets in Canberra are named after Fred and Marjorie, with a citation providing further background to her career:

Marjorie Matthews studied architecture at Sydney Technical College completing subjects in the period 1917-28. She was employed by architect S.H. Buchanan in 1920 and registered as an architect in NSW in 1929 while working for the Government Architects Branch in Sydney. In 1934 as one of the first qualified female architects to practise in Canberra she was involved with residential design in Forrest. She returned to Sydney and during the Second World War she represented the Modern Architectural Research Society on the Technical Bodies' Advisory Committee which provided input on Australian housing standards. By 1945 Matthews had designed many dock buildings around Sydney. By 1947 she practised in Launceston, Tasmania. In 1951 she registered as an architect in Perth WA, and in 1952 had moved to London. Marjorie died in England.

Fred left the public service in 1937 and joined Prevost and Ancher in Sydney, becoming a partner with Prevost after Syd Ancher departed. In the early 1940s he started his involvement with the Modern Architectural Research Society (MARS) in Sydney. Following the commencement of the Second World War (1939-1945), and after the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941, McCardell enlisted with the Royal Australian Naval Reserve (which he had first joined in the 1920s) and served there from 1942. When he enlisted his next of kin was noted as Marjorie Matthews of 196 West Street North Sydney, but it appears the couple had drifted apart by this time. Demobilised at Fremantle in November 1948, by December Fred had joined architects Krantz and Sheldon in Perth. He was registered by the Architects Board of Western Australia on 8 February 1949 (reg no.199).



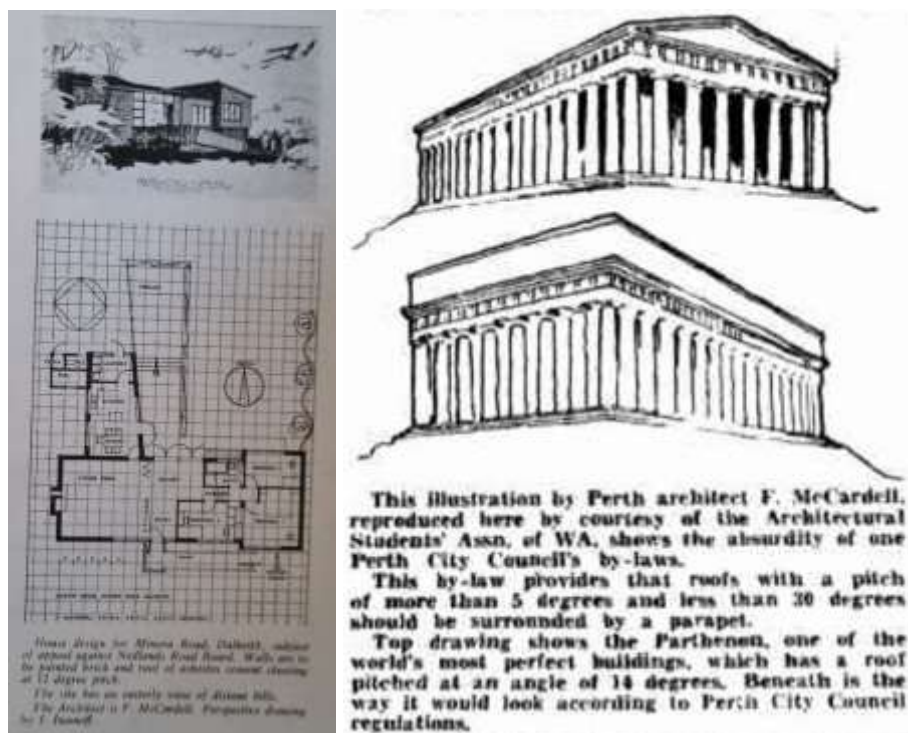
Fred and Vera McCardell at a ball with the Krantzs, (*Western Mail*, 31 August 1950, p.27).

In 1949 Fred McCardell was married to Vera Freiberg-Stepanoff, and they had children - Antony born in 1949, and Elizabeth Eve born in 1953. Vera taught yoga, and in the 1950s the McCardells opened the Yoga School of Perth at Hay Street in the city. In 1956 McCardell designed and built a modernist home for the family, inspired by Japanese architecture, at 123 Fairway Nedlands. John Oldham, landscape architect and family friend, designed the garden.

Fred commenced his own architectural practice in Perth WA in 1951, designing a number of innovative modernist buildings, primarily domestic to begin with. He had a professed interest in solar control, building construction and detailing. One suburban architectural project of note was undertaken in 1954 when Fred was joint architect with Margaret Feilman (1921-2013) for a supermarket on the corner of Berwick Street and Canning Highway in South Perth (Victoria Park). In 1956

a second supermarket followed at Inglewood for John Wills. Unfortunately the digitisation of Western Australian newspapers for the National Library of Australia's 'Trove' archive is currently stalled at 1954-55, and remote analysis of McCardell's work is less possible without simpler access to these sources from that time onward.

Journalist Ray Oldham (wife of John Oldham) writing in the *Sunday Times* newspaper under the nom de plume 'Jane Scott' featured a number of Fred's domestic works in 1955, including houses at Kintail Road Applecross, Birdwood Parade Dalkeith, Fraser Road Applecross, and a 'Skillion roof controversial' at Minora Road Dalkeith. A number of Fred's design utilising skillion roofs were contentious with council authorities who were reluctant to approve modernist designs, earning the combative architect's appeals to the Minister for Local Government – which he inevitably won.



At left - McCardell's design for the Martin house in Minora Road, Dalkeith (with perspective drawing by Iwan Iwanoff) was not favoured by the Nedlands Road Board; and at right McCardell's sketch of the Parthenon in Athens and 'the Perthanon', utilised in argument with building by-laws in WA ('Appeal against Nedlands Road Board on roof design', *The Architect*, March 1952, p.12; 'Some of our building laws absurd', *Sunday Times*, 11 July 1954, p.19).

Renowned architectural educator and historian Duncan Richards recalls some of his own and wife Oline's recollections in relation to Fred: *When a student Oline worked for two years for Fred when he had an office in Sherwood Court. She has*

always spoken well of this time. I recall her telling me that Fred thought that only Mervyn Parry could match him in architectural ability in Perth at that time. Interesting! My interest in Fred was focussed on the work he did with MARS when he was in Sydney. This seemed significant. Fred gave us a batch of MARS documents, publications, etc from that time.

Mount Pleasant resident John Vernes recalled that: *Fred McCardell built a house next door to us when we lived in Parkside Avenue, around 1958 or so. He used white silica bricks and if my recollection is correct, white mortars as well. The subbies had to be very careful to keep the brickwork spotlessly clean! This may have been the house of his older brother, as Elizabeth McCardell recalls that: 'Uncle Jim, Dad's older brother also suicided, after the death of his second wife Mavis from breast cancer. ... Uncle Jim shot himself. I was very fond of him. He was a much softer man than my father. Dad designed their house in Mt Pleasant, a particularly lovely place with a conservatory filled with African violets in the centre of the house. Total romance, as far as I could see.'*

Interviewed by Oline Richards in 1987, Fred recalled his respect for 1950s local architects such as Eric Leach (noting the influence of Leach's own residence at Mosman Park), Des Sands, and Mervyn Parry. McCardell's job list included a hall for the Shire of Dalwallinu in 1960, followed by many projects for the WA Public Works Department (PWD) in the 1960s and early 1970s, including much of the work at the Wembley Trades School (later Technical College) from 1961, numerous school buildings and some nurses' quarters. Mandurah and Gosnells telephone exchanges were undertaken for the Commonwealth Government. The State Library of WA has photographic records of some of Fred's projects from the early 1960s, shown following.



Wembley Technical School, Salvado Road, Wembley of 1962 (SLWA 340,566PD)



Mosman Park Residence of 1964 (SLWA 340,641PD and 340,642PD)



Flag-stoned courtyard of house in Claremont of 1964 (SLWA 340,643PD)

With ongoing domestic and PWD work, McCardell's interest in arbitration had progressed in the 1960s under mentor Edgar Le Blond Henderson (1890-1971), and Fred's first case was undertaken in 1962. In 1976 he joined the Institute of Arbitrators which had been formed a year before, and he became a Grade 1 arbitrator in 1977. Fred had worked in partnership with Eric Moyle (1924-2001) and Ken Barrett (1939-2012) during 1967-1968, but by the mid-1970s his sole-practice forte had become arbitration.



Baptist Theological College by McCardell, Moyle & Barrett (*The Architect*, 9 1 1968, pp.50-53)

Fred taught at Perth Technical College and Curtin University of Technology, and was a long serving member of the editorial committee of *The Architect*, the journal of Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) in WA, in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1979 McCardell published *Building Failures and Disputes*, part of a Continuing Education Programme for Architects, in association with the University of Western Australia Extension Service. Fred was Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, 1966; Fellow and Grade 1 Arbitrator, Institute of Arbitrators (UK), 1972; Foundation Fellow and Grade 1 Arbitrator, Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators, Australia, 1976; and in 1978 was awarded Life Fellowship of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.



F. McCARDELL, F.R.A.I.A., F.R.I.B.A., A.I. ARB.

Fred McCardell shown in a yoga pose, one of a series of sketches of editors of *The Architect* (*The Architect*, 70/2 100th edition, p.20)

Fred was an Architects Board of Western Australia (ABWA) board member from 1970 to 2000, and in 1989 was honoured with the ABWA Award - granted to recognise special endeavours outside of normal business practices.

In 2022, Perth architect Kim Doepel recalled his experience with McCardell:

I shared office space with Fred from 1981 to 1988 , in the former Grigg House [Peter] with Neil Wood architect. It was a wonderful occasion when the RAIA hosted a luncheon for him on his 100 birthday, attended by many. Fred was also my mentor while I was at WAIT, and was instrumental in guiding me through the registration examinations. He as you may know spent the later part of his long career in sorting out problems, through arbitration or mediation, resulting in many receiving an equitable outcomes without the huge legal fees of Court action.

Fred was a yoga master and taught for many years and travelled extensively throughout south east Asia, he was blessed with a very dry sense of humour and had the ability to understand the most complex problems with a simple straight forward solution, he was always calm and was an excellent ambassador for the profession of architects and the Institute, which he was most probably its longest serving member.



Fred McCardell LFRAIA in 2006 (RAIA 'Memo' Nov 2006)

A remarkable practitioner who was blessed with great longevity, Fred McCardell retired in 2001, and devoted further time to writing articles on architects and architecture. He died 2 June 2007 at Nedlands aged 100 years, survived by son Antony and daughter Elizabeth.

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Australian Capital Territory Public Place Names (Taylor) Determination, Disallowable Instrument DI2017-34, 2017 (McCardell and Marjorie Matthews names of streets in suburb of Taylor).

National Archives - MCCARDELL FREDERICK : Date of birth - 23 Jul 1906 : Place of birth - SYDNEY NSW : Place of enlistment - SYDNEY : Next of Kin – MARJORIE

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Pers. comms April 2022 from Elizabeth McCardell; and:

Ralph Drexel (junior for Fred 1954 at St George's Terrace, domestic work, Vera yoga).

Paul Regan (WAIT valuation mid 1970s, Fred building lecturer – 'articulate, humourless').

Peter George (WAIT valuation 1978-79, Fred building lecturer – 'very dry').

Heritage Committee meeting approval date: 16 June 2022 Last updated: 16 June 2022

Citation details:

Taylor, Dr John J., 'Frederick McCardell (1906-2007)', Western Australian Architect Biographies, <http://www.taylorarchitects.com.au/Biographies.html> accessed DATE.