

Mervyn Henry Parry

(Freeland, J. M. *The Making of a Profession*, A & R, Sydney, 1971, foll. p. 266.)

**Mervyn Henry Parry** (1913-2006) was born 2 September 1913 at the home of architect George Herbert Parry (1882-1951) and Isla Parry (nee Burt) in Bagot Road, Subiaco. Mervyn was educated at Hale School. He served his articles under his father while studying at Perth Technical College. In 1934 he was one of a number of students who enlisted the help of architect Murray Forster to conduct a weekly design class held in the tower room of PTC. This was the modest beginning of the present school of architecture at Curtin University. Moving to London in 1937, he worked in the offices of architects Welch and Lander and Robert Atkinson, whilst studying at the Regent Street Polytechnic. In the Second World War he served as a bomber pilot and squadron leader, being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (twice) and the Air Force Cross. Following the war he completed his architectural studies at the School of Technology, Oxford. In March 1947 he returned to Perth on the *Asturias* with his first wife and small daughter, then entering into practice with his father.

In November 1952, an article in *The West Australian* noted: "Domestic architecture is gradually becoming a true reflection of the less formal manner in which Australians are tending to live". The article referred to a new Parry & Parry home at the corner of David and Raymond Streets in Mount Pleasant, built for £3,500 in just 15 weeks. "In Western Australia there is an awakening to the need for a more logical approach to the design and construction of buildings and particularly the home. This approach begins with an understanding of our climate, materials and techniques. Evidence of this can be seen in recently-built homes in the metropolitan area planned to allow the flow of house space

into the garden, of which more use is being made as living space. Attention to aspect by avoiding summer sun, but inviting the warmth of winter sun, can be seen by large northern glass walls, blank west walls and overhanging eaves.” These were Mervyn Parry's ideals, utilising correct orientation and passive solar design principles, so often ignored with post-war speculative builders' homes which disregarded cross-ventilation, lighting and aspect.

Mervyn designed a Post-War International, also termed 'Modern Movement', style residence for himself at Ozone Terrace, Kalamunda. It was completed in 1952, again notable for its functional zoning and rational orientation for climatic control. In 1953 Agnes Durack retained Mervyn Parry to design and manage the construction of a residence at 110 Melvista Avenue, Dalkeith, completed and occupied in 1954. As a personal experiment, Mervyn Parry acted as the builder for the house, employing the labour and subcontractors. This was one of only two residences where he acted as both architect and builder, the other being for Howard Smith off Bindaring Parade, Claremont.

The house at 110 Melvista Avenue is also of the Post-War International style, and displayed all the characteristics of Parry's excellent building orientation and floor planning skills. It was fitted with 'Crittall' doors and windows. The Crittall Company is understood to have supplied door and window framing for many notable modern buildings, including Frank Lloyd Wright's famous residential design, Falling Waters. The Crittall Manufacturing Company (Australia) Pty Ltd was a relatively small concern operating in Perth from the 1930s, supplying steel-framed windows for domestic and industrial purposes.

It has been noted that Parry was a leader in the design of post-war housing in WA, with examples given as the Constable House at Bassendean, Cuthbert House at Darlington, Hagen House at Harvey, Bunning House at Peppermint Grove, Gregson House at Nedlands, Murray House at Kalamunda, and the Cohen House at Applecross.

With Ken Rosenthal, Parry formed the partnership of Parry & Rosenthal in 1959, a firm that is still in existence. Although the business still undertook a large number of domestic commissions, the scale of work gradually broadened in a more commercial direction, and included the development of an award-winning industrialised building system. In 1963 Parry & Rosenthal produced the

library and kindergarten at Haldane Street, Mount Claremont, another Modern Movement building. Other major buildings designed by the practice under Mervyn's direction included Melville Senior High School, Botany and Biology building at UWA, School of Engineering at WAIT (now Curtin University), and the Travelodge Hotel. Parry & Rosenthal were the recipient of the 1973 RAI A Bronze Medal for their work at Lake Karrinyup Country Club.

Mervyn Parry was active in architectural education and affairs throughout his career, acting as a member of the Architects Board of Western Australia from 1954 to 1970, State President of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) in 1961-62, and National President 1966-67. He was honoured with the RAI A Gold Medal, the highest tribute the RAI A can bestow, in 1978.

One of Western Australia's most distinguished and awarded architects, Mervyn Parry died 17 October 2006, aged 93 years. He was survived by his widow and children from three marriages.

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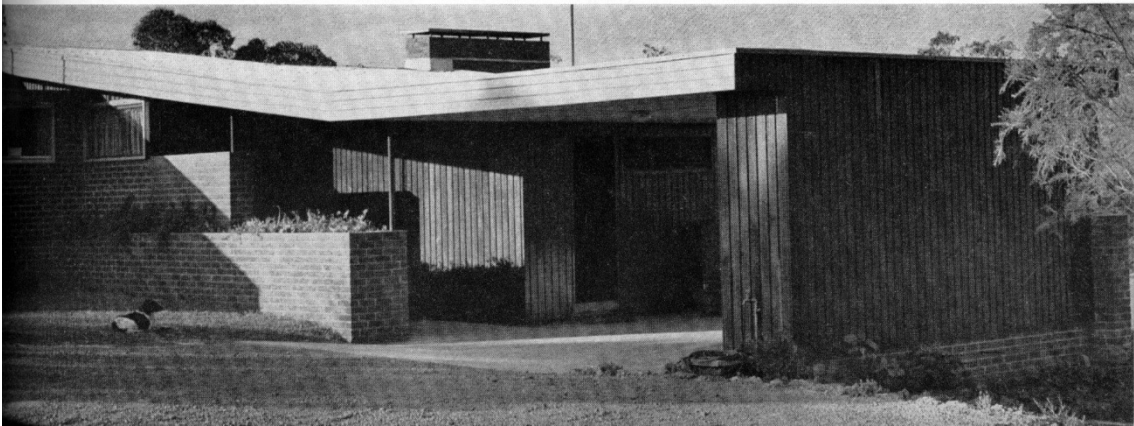
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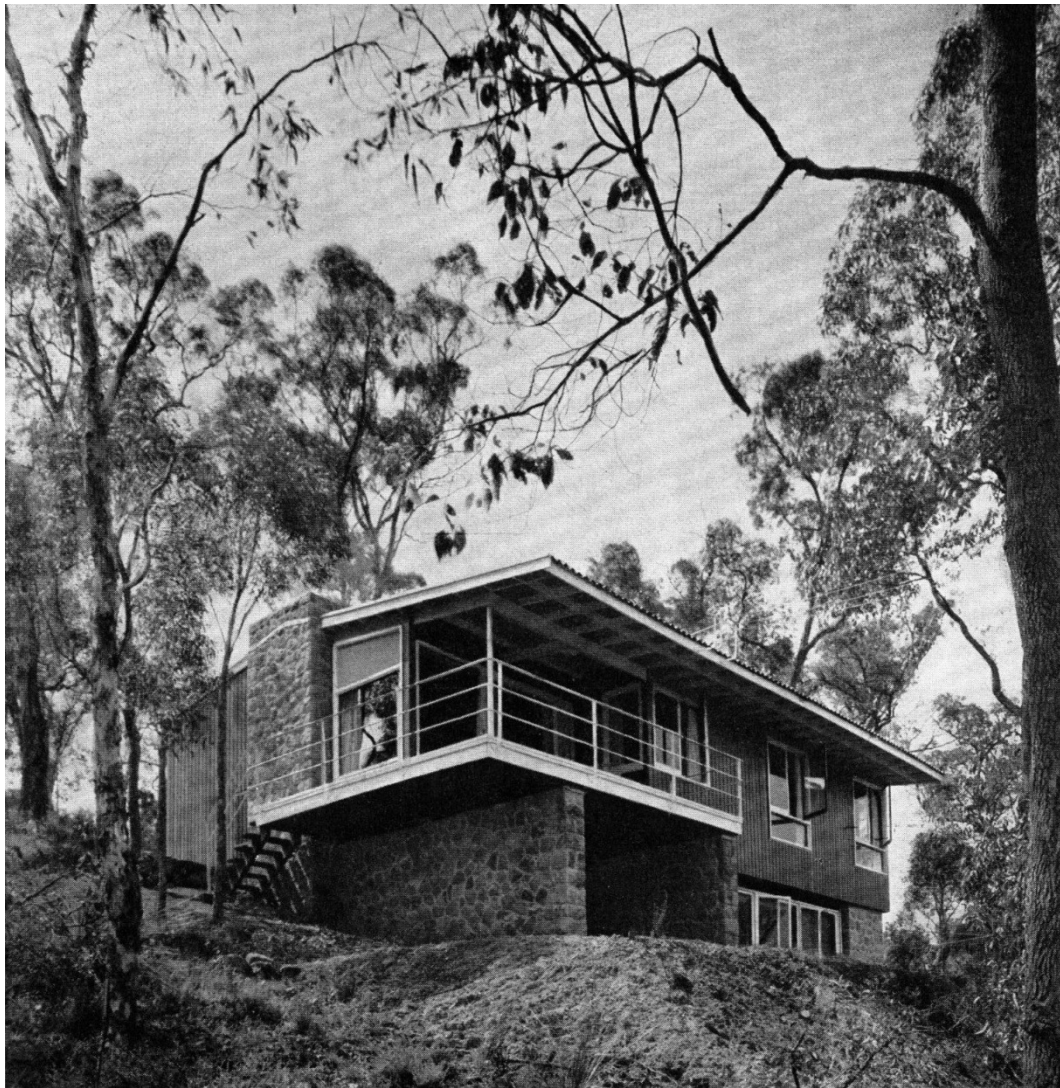
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Constable House, Bassendean (Special Edition of *The Architect* issued for 8th Australian Architectural Convention in 1958, courtesy Katrina Chisholm).



Cuthbert Residence, Darlington (Special Edition of *The Architect* issued for 8th Australian Architectural Convention in 1958, courtesy Katrina Chisholm).



110 Melvista Avenue, Dalkeith 1953-54 (c.1961, Durack Family)



Lake Karrynup Country Club 1974 (SLWA 327522PD)