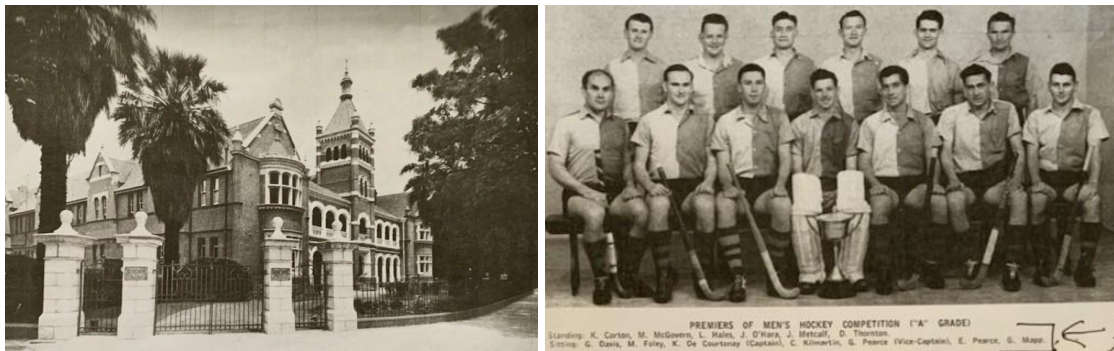


Gene Mapp on his 21st birthday; and c.1959 Risco & Kos portrait (Janis Mapp-Sonnemann)

Eugene (Gene) Davies Mapp (1932-1998) was born 18 September 1932 at Faversham Hospital in Glenroyd Street, Mount Lawley. Gene's parents were Llewellyn Davies and Eugenie Gertrude ('Jean', nee Purling) Mapp, who had married at Maylands in September 1930. The couple had further children, Janis Patricia b.1935, and Marie b.1943. With his brother William, Llew Mapp had established Mapp Bros, a successful joinery business in Perth.

Gene attended high school at the Christian Brothers' College in Perth until 1949, where he was a top level hockey player, and then entered the relatively new School of Architecture at Perth Technical College (PTC) under the directorship of William (Bill) H. Robertson (1905-1953). Following the Second World War (1939-1945), Robertson had assisted to launch the architectural course at PTC in 1946.



CBC Perth at 1 St George's Terrace, Perth; CBC Old Boys A Grade Hockey Team of 1955 with Gene Mapp at right. The team were WA Hockey Assoc. Premiers 1955-1956 - 4 members of the team played for Australia in the 1956 Olympic Games (CBC Annual, courtesy John Edgar).

Gene lived with his family at 81 Fairfield Street in Mount Hawthorn, and studied at PTC from 1950 to 1955, when he attained his Associateship in Architecture. Gene's graduating class included a number of architects who would become well-known in WA - including Tony Brand, Gus Ferguson, Brian Jackson, Garry Leighton, Noel Ryan and Bill Weedon.



Architecture students football match, half time at Perth oval, about 1953 (Bill Weedon).



Architectural students and friends: Gene Mapp, Garry Leighton, Barbara Green, Tony Brand, unknown, Valerie Johnston, Brian Jackson, and 'Paddy' Malloch about 1953 (Valerie Jackson).
Barbara and Tony married in 1955, Valerie and Brian married in 1956.

Seeking further experience, Gene departed for South Africa with two of his fellow PTC graduates on the *Moreton Bay* in February 1957. The party of five on the ship included Gus Ferguson (1931-2024) and his wife Clare, and Brian Jackson (1931-2019) and his wife Valerie. The group arrived in Cape Town, where they bought a car, driving throughout Southern Africa before ending up in Salisbury, Rhodesia, now Harare, Zimbabwe. Africa was experiencing a copper boom, which promised easy employment for the recent graduates.

Gene's sister Marie recalls: *He was not that keen on South Africa as apartheid was seriously taking hold in South Africa and had been in practice for about nine years, but loved the topography and peoples of Cape Town. I seem to remember he also worked in Johannesburg, but for whom and how long I'm at a loss to say. He did mention he was working for the architects involved with the Kariba Dam in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and it seems in the same breath he said he hitch-hiked up the east coast of Africa, but didn't go into any detail on that subject. On arriving in Europe and travelling through Denmark he met Lise, who on his return to Perth, married.*

Thus virtually no record of Gene Mapp's overseas travel and work experience in 1957-1958 is held. He appears to have re-met with colleagues in London, before returning to Australia. After working at architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon (CPB) in London, in June 1959 Gus Ferguson and two other members of the CPB office, Peter Deakins and Michael Neylan, undertook a seven month tour of Europe and Asia. Also on the trip was Clare Ferguson, Gene Mapp, and an interior designer Liz Vercoe (later Grieb) from Bates, Smart & McCutcheon's Melbourne office.

Prior to his return to Western Australia at the end of 1959, Gene had met the somewhat younger Copenhagen-born Ingelise Blumensen (1940-2024) while travelling in Denmark. Although she had limited English-language skills, hairdresser 'Lise' was enticed by Gene to move to Australia, and in July 1960 embarked on the *SS Aurelia* from the port of Bremerhaven, Germany, rejoining Gene at Fremantle in August of 1960. Gene and Lise were soon married, with Gene's close friend George Palmer (a drafter) acting as best man at the wedding. The couple went on to have two daughters, Jacqueline b.1962 and Heidi b.1968.

Gene appears to have started working as an architect on his own account around February of 1963, when he was registered with the Architects Board of Western Australia (ABWA reg. no. 398). At this time he was listed in electoral records at 39 Keightley Road Subiaco. By 1964 Mapp was at Lot 19 Glen Road in Darlington, where he renovated a very small run-down 1910 house, enlarging it in stages to form the family home. Extensions were designed and built around the old building – including for an office, and at the rear for the two daughters, some portions insulated with fire retardant treated straw.



Mapp house at Lot 19 (now No. 965) Glen Road Darlington (2025, realestate.com.au)

Heidi recalls her father designing eco-friendly houses at this comparatively early time, and Gene gained a good number of domestic commissions in the Darlington and surrounding hills area. Renowned architectural historian Duncan Richards has written of a group he termed the ‘Hills Designers’:

During the 1960s and 1970s a small group of Western Australian architectural designers was actively involved in a search for what Wright [Frank Lloyd Wright] termed ‘organic simplicity’. As one of the group remarked, ‘simplicity will generate its own beauty’. Their buildings, mainly houses, can be found in many of Perth’s suburbs, but the greatest concentration of works are found in the various hills communities that dot the line of the Darling Ranges.

The tendency to prefer to build in the hills areas was a logical choice for designers who saw their work as organic and who wished to sympathetically relate a building to a natural environment and to a site. In many cases the difficult or even ‘impossible sites’ that were available in the hills were not only economical for clients to acquire, but resulted in the most innovative and creative design solutions.

Most members of this group (which included Wallace Greenham) both lived and worked in the hills in the period of the 1960s and 1970s and consequently knew each other and each other's work. In many ways the key figures in a far from coherent group that I have termed the 'hills designers' were William (Bill) Kierath, Eugene (Gene) Mapp and Kenneth (Ken) Waldron, all of whom were in partnership or in association during the 1960s.

Bruce Callow, another architect who was resident in the hills area for many years recalls: *'... there are three of his terrific houses in Michael Crescent, on the other side of the road to where we used to live at Boya for 45 years up until the move to our new house in 2022. These three were real gems, two opposite us were built in the early 1970's for two brothers who were muso's and they used to have jam sessions between their houses that filled the valley with wonderful jazz trumpet and piano. The third one was a couple of blocks to the west and built a bit earlier. The three houses have all had some alterations and additions done in the last 20 years or so but the Gene Mapp bones are still pretty much intact. The two brothers were side by side in Nos 13 & 15 Michael Cres opposite us were built between 1974-76. No 21 was a few doors down and was built in 1971 for Ian (ornithologist with CSIRO at Helena Valley) and Barbara Rowley.*



1971 – 21 Michael Crescent Boya (2025, realestate.com.au)



1972 – 2 Binbrook Place, Darlington (2025, realestate.com.au)



1975 – 15 Michael Crescent Boya (2025, realestate.com.au)



1976 - 13 Michael Crescent Boya (2025, realestate.com.au)

Gene and Lise Mapp divorced circa 1974, when Heidi was just six and a half years old. Gene had sole custody of the girls, and they moved to a communal property Currawinya near Tabulum in northern New South Wales in 1977. Gene effectively dropped out of society, taking up rural pursuits. They lived in a tent on the Cataract River just below the main house until 1979. After a short visit to WA to sell the Glen Road property, they initially built at Paddy's Flat on the Clarence River, and around 1984 moved to Mosquito Creek, a tributary of the Clarence River. Here they built 'Gene's Humpy' out of locally sourced stone and timber, and where Gene lived until he was diagnosed with cancer in 1997.

Gene Mapp had also worked with a fellow Darlington architect Ernest Veszely (ABWA reg. no. 668). Heidi recalls close social contacts with the nearby family, 'who lived on the same road as Darlington Hall'. Veszely was at Lot 12 Amherst Avenue, Darlington by at least the early 1970s, and had followed Gene to Currawinya by the 1980s. 'Ernie' notes that Gene did a studio for artist Bob Juniper and a house for photographer Richard Woldendorp in the mid-1970s. Fremantle-based architect Murray Slavin recalls of Gene: *He was one of the twenty shareholders I assembled to buy a 2,500ha farm [Currawinya] around the junction of the Clarence and Cataract Rivers. The property's still under the same*

ownership but Gene's share was handed on to his daughters who sold it. It's achieving what I set out to do, which is to go back to wilderness, but with a number of strategically placed homestead leases to assist in its maintenance and management.

Gene left Mosquito Creek and stayed with friends in Byron Bay to be closer to cancer treatment, before going to Brisbane for further care. At 65 years of age, Gene Mapp passed away in February 1998 at Beaudesert Hospital Queensland. Gene didn't remarry; Lise moved to Alice Springs and then to the cooler climate of Tasmania, passing away during March 2024. Burdened with the care of her brilliant but sometimes erratic father in later years, Heidi described Gene as 'socially inept', which perhaps explains his comfort in remote living.

Due to his low-key and relatively short architectural career, Gene Mapp is one of the less visible of the more than 120 Western Australian architects who graduated from PTC between 1950 and 1967, when the course was transferred to the Western Australian Institute of Technology. And yet his 1960s-1970s domestic work is still recalled in Western Australian architectural circles, principally due to his alternative lifestyle philosophies and 'organic' architectural design and building output. Mapp's unusual life and career deserves further and more detailed study in the future, perhaps at undergraduate thesis level.

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