



Jim and Phyl Wilkinson at their Wembley Downs home c.1960 (courtesy Narelle Pendlebury)

James (Jim) Edward Wilkinson (1929-2020) was born 24 July 1929 at Bassendean to James Edgar and Daphne Jean Lamont (nee Douglas) Wilkinson, who had married in December 1915 at the Church of Christ in West Guildford. Daphne would have been relieved when her twenty-six year old husband's application to enlist in the Australian Imperial Forces for service in the First World War (1914-1918) was rejected on medical grounds in August 1916. At that time his occupation was listed as 'clerk', and their address was Surrey Street, West Guildford. The couple had children Jean Marie b.1918, Raymond James b.1920, David George b.1922, Bidy Marquerite b.1924, Jim's twin brother Joseph Hector b.1929, and Daphne Barbara b.1934.

In the 1920s Jim's father was an accountant and a budding entrepreneur. By late 1929 he purchased an agricultural machinery business in Morawa. Unfortunately, the Great Depression began the same year and his financial position deteriorated as the farmers were unable to purchase new machinery. By the end of 1930 the business folded, and the Wilkinson family moved back to Bassendean. Jim's father mined gold at Mount Magnet to support the family while Daphne and the children went to live at her parent's farm at East Pingelly. Jim and Joe loved the farm. Eventually the family moved to 107 Fairfield Street in Mount Hawthorn. In a eulogy for Jim, his cousin Gavin noted that: 'Jim's father was musical and also composed poems. Bidy recalled one that her twin brothers Jim and Joe would often recite:

*We are twin boys you know
One named Jim and one named Joe
We are so alike in face and limb
Sometimes you can't tell Joe from Jim.
So if at times you are in doubt
Ask mummy and you will soon find out.'*

The twins were inseparable and did everything together. Holidays were enjoyed at Rottnest and North Beach where they fished for abalone. They loved riding their bikes and would often ride from North Perth to Bassendean to see their grandparents. During their teenage years, an integral part of their social life was the North Perth Methodist church. It was quite a social group of people, playing lots of tennis, and it was there that Jim met his future wife.

A talented student, Jim obtained a scholarship to Perth Modern School, and in January 1945 his Junior Certificate results were published – with passes in English, History, Geography, Arithmetic/Algebra, Physics, Drawing, Woodwork. The seventeen year old's father died suddenly at Fairfield Street in August 1946 as Jim was completing his Leaving Certificate, obtaining passes in English, Mathematics A and B, Physics, and Drawing. Jim joined the relatively new architectural course at Perth Technical College (PTC) from 1948.

Prior to the Second World War (1939-1945), architectural students who did not receive academic training overseas or in other States, had been obliged to train in WA under a system of indenture to individual architects. The products of this system of architectural education were trained rather than educated and clearly bore the marks of the architect who trained them. During the war it could be foreseen that great demands would be placed on the building industry when peace eventuated, and in 1946 William (Bill) Robertson (with Arnold Camerer) inaugurated the first academic architectural course at PTC. Robertson had attended meetings of the Modern Architectural Research Society at Sydney in the early 1940s, and through him the society's philosophies had an influence on the nature of the course at PTC. Robertson was also strongly oriented to construction and practical aspects, and the curriculum he organized was accordingly a very practical one. Jim and the close-knit PTC community were shocked to hear of Bill Robertson's death in March 1953, aged just 48 years.

Jim completed his Associateship in Architecture in 1953 within a tight-knit class that included Warwick Broomfield, Ted Cartwright, Ross Chisholm, Bob Day, Ray Durbridge, Lex Hill, Bob Lyon, and Fred Warren. In December 1953 *The Sunday Times* carried notes of the students' and their partners' joy at completion of the course: *QUITE a change to see party hats in the sophisticated Shaftesbury surroundings. Reason for the Jollity was the conclusion of final exams for a group of budding architects, and the large party consisted of Bob and Thelma Day, Jim Wilkinson, Phyl Baskerville, Bob and Beryl Lyons, Ted Cartwright, Beryl Marshall, Fred Warren, "Liz" Humphrey, Warwick Bloomfield, Pat Bimer, Lex Hill, Joanne Ainsley, Ross Chisholm, and Shirley Sutherland.*

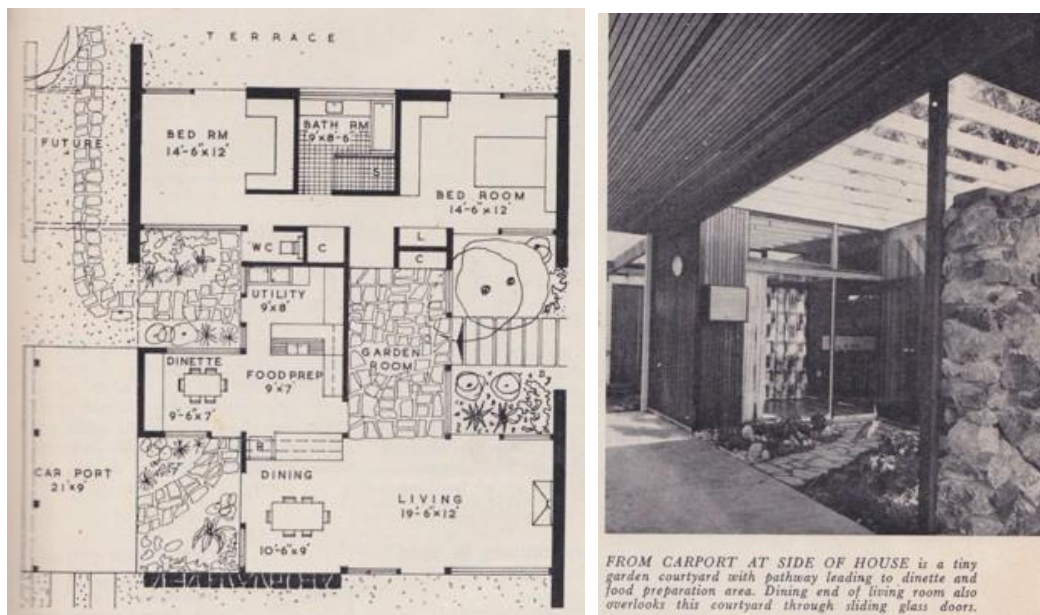
Jim had begun as a cadet with the Public Works Department (PWD), and registered with the Architects Board of WA (ABWA no. 270) during 1954. In 1955 Jim and Phyllis Gertrude Baskerville were married, they subsequently had four children - Robyn b.1960, Narelle b.1962, Kerri b.1967, and Brett b.1969. With the PTC architecture course only commencing in 1946, in the first three PTC graduating years (1950-1952) preceding Jim's class there had been just 23 graduates, and a fair number of these young architects soon travelled to gain further architectural and worldly experience, living as 'ex-pats' overseas. These colleagues included 1950 graduates Stuart Coll, Gil Nicol, Alan Shepherd, Geoff Summerhayes; 1951 graduate Ed Whitaker; 1952 graduates John Duncan, Ray Leunig, John Lidbury, John White; and Jim's fellow 1953 graduate Ross Chisholm. Returning to Perth in late 1952, Nicol became a partner with Powell, Cameron & Chisholm; hence known as Cameron, Chisholm & Nicol (CC&N).

Powell, Cameron & Chisholm had evolved from a practice initially founded in the nineteenth century. Oswald Chisholm (1903-1989) had become a partner in 1930, followed in turn by Ken Cameron (1909-1967), son of Alex Cameron (1878-1961), in 1934. By the time the 26 year old Nicol joined as a partner, Thomas Powell (1864-1946) had passed away, Alex Cameron had retired in 1949, and the senior partners were 49 year old 'Ossie' Chisholm and 42 year old Ken Cameron. Ossie's son Ross (1931-1998) was made a partner in 1958. Moving from the PWD, Jim Wilkinson joined CC&N in the later 1950s, and by 1960 the associate directors at the firm were Jim Wilkinson, Bill Weedon (b.1931, ABWA reg no 346), and Ian Brackenridge (b.1935, ABWA reg no 317).

With children arriving, in the late 1950s Jim designed his family home at Hale Road in Wembley Downs, and the exciting modern design, an example of the emerging PTC graduates' design ethos, was soon featured in magazines - along with Ian Brackenridge's new house at Applecross.



Front and rear views of Wilkinson House, 146 Hale Road Wembley Downs (*Australian House and Garden*, Nov 1960, cover page; Narelle Pendlebury).



Plan and entry photo of Wilkinson House (*Australian House and Garden*, Nov 1960, p.23).

Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Gold Medal winners Gil Nicol and Ross Chisholm were the most recognised architects of CC&N. There were a number of other solid partners driving the success of the firm, including Jim Wilkinson, Laurie Fuhrmann, John Koivisto and Bill Weedon. With a large staff working across many complex projects, attribution of CC&N design work in the 1960s-1980s to singular persons would be unrealistic, but projects firmly in Jim's province included the Forests Department complex at the Bentley pine plantation [designed with Vin Davies (1928-2010) of the PWD], Metropolitan Transport Trust

depots, the first Karrinyup shopping centre, Prendiville Catholic College at Ocean Reef, and the brutalist Perth Central Fire Station (which included a study tour to the UK for Jim; however the building was demolished in 2014). Jim's daughter Narelle recalls that as staff partner he set-up the Sydney and Canberra offices; and that he was very upset when having to let-go staff in recessionary times.



Perth Central Fire Station, corner Hay and Irwin Streets, Perth, c.1980 (SLWA 222657PD).

An extremely kind and generous man, Jim mentored many staff at CC&N through the 1960s to 1980s, and even assisted soon-to-be prominent builder Joe De Francesch to develop his skills in both language and business. In 1975 the CC&N offices were at 28 Kings Park Road in West Perth, and they soon moved to Allendale Square, the CC&N designed tower at 77 St George's Terrace Perth, which was opened in 1976.

ABWA records suggest that Jim retired from CC&N in 1990, at 60 years of age, and he was able to enjoy ongoing life with his children and grandchildren. A teetotaler, Jim loved travelling, gardening, music - in later years he joined an a capella group – the Westcoast Chordsmen. James Wilkinson died 18 February 2020 at City Beach aged 90 years, Phyl had passed away in 2005 and Jim's twin, Joe had died back in 1997.

Jim's professional qualities were acknowledged by the conferring of the honorific titles Associate of the RAIA in 1954, and Fellow of the RAIA in 1970. Jim Wilkinson was a highly-respected and long-standing foundation to CC&N, the commercially successful practice that would make a significant contribution to architecture in Australia during the second half of the twentieth century, with the business continuing into the twenty-first century.

Jim Wilkinson was one of the new breed of architects in WA in the highly-charged post Second World War (1939-1945) development period. Although a few still chose to develop their skills through an article system (with Architect Board examinations), and immigration brought a small number of European refugee architects, the majority of WA architects at this time were locally-born and graduates of PTC. The close association of PTC graduates of the 1950s and 1960s gave this group a strong sense of familiarity and cohesion, and many soon travelled overseas together to absorb further international developments in modern architecture. They developed distinctive local domestic and commercial styles, now gaining further study and recognition.

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2020 'Jim's eulogy by Gavin Wilkinson', courtesy Narelle Pendlebury.

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