

Jack Finney (*Gazette*, WAIT, vol.3, no.3, May 1970, p.9)

**John ('Jack') Spence Finney** (1926-2017) was born at *Hatney*, 77 Lawley Crescent Mount Lawley on 10 February 1926. His father John Spence Finney senior (1885-1971) a storekeeper of 156 Cambridge Street West Leederville, enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces during 1916, served on the Western Front in the First World War (1914-1918), and returned to WA in September 1919.

Jack Finney senior and Doris Jane Hatch (1892-1969) were married at the West Perth-Leederville Congregational Church in November 1919. Their first daughter Doris Jean was born at *Hatney* in 1921. Second child Norma Clare was also born at *Hatney* in 1924, and Jack senior was working for the Shell Oil Company when fourth child Edna Mary was born at their residence *Hillcrest*, Bridgetown in 1932. Jack junior attended Bridgetown and Highgate primary schools, Perth Boys' High School, and the Blennerhasset School of Accountancy.

During the period 1942-1944, young Jack worked as an audit clerk with S.J. McGibbon & Co Chartered Accountants, before undertaking Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) training during 1944-1945. By this time the Second World War (1939-1945) was coming to an end, there was no longer a demand for pilots, and thus Jack and his future classmate John Lidbury did not see overseas service. 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 Perth Technical College (PTC).

Jack attended PTC from 1946-1952, initially obtaining his Leaving Certificate as a Post-War Rehabilitation Trainee, and undertaking vacation employment in the architectural practice of Parry and Parry during 1948-1949. He was engaged as a draftsman (one day off per week during term time to attend lectures) in the practice of Howard Bonner and Associates in 1950-1952. Jack graduated with an Associateship in Architecture in a class that included future architects of

influence in Western Australia such as Gres Cohen, Alex Doepel, John Duncan, Morris Fairbrother, John Lidbury, Eddie McMillan, Leslie Moon (died 1959 at just 34yo), Colin Nicholas, Dennis Silver, Bill Waters, and John White.

Jack Finney and Dorothy Eileen Sadler were married at the Methodist Church, Guildford in April 1952, with John Duncan one of Jack's best men. 'Dot' Sadler had undertaken architecture studies at PTC in 1950-1951. Jack and Dot had four children: Barbara born 1953, Catherine 1954, Rick 1957, and Tim 1961.

Twenty-six year old Jack Finney, of 5 Harvest Terrace in Perth was registered (no.247) with the Architects Board of Western Australia in December 1952. Finney and the close-knit PTC architectural community were soon shocked to hear of Bill Robertson's unexpected death in March 1953, aged just 48 years.



PTC School of Architecture football team 1952 (courtesy Lidbury family)

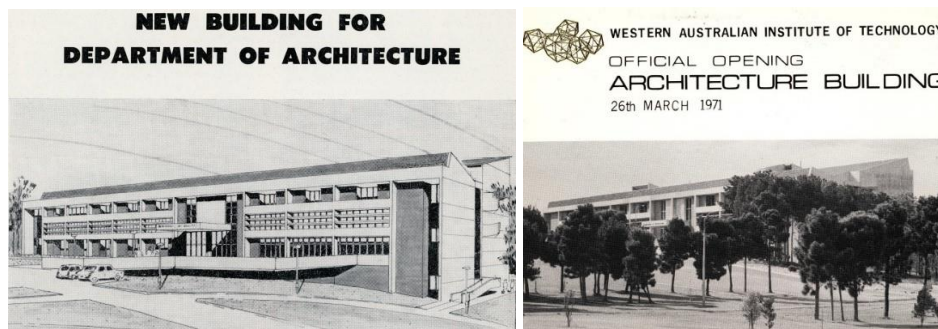
Back: Peter Bruechle, Don Collins, Jack Finney, Bob Lyon, Ross Chisholm, Bill Weedon, Alex Doepel  
 M: Arch Jones, Ron Facius, Gus Ferguson, Col Nicholas, Morris Fairbrother, Scott Thompson, Bill Angove  
 Front: Eddie McMillan, Bill Waters, Bill Robertson, John Lidbury, Bob Day, Ted Cartwright

Architect Howard Bonner (1904-1975) had formed a partnership in 1950 with Bruce Atkinson (1920-1983), trading as Howard Bonner and Associates. Jack Finney joined the firm full-time as an associate in 1953. Over time the practice consisted of varied work embracing schools, theatres, shops, flats, residences, industrial buildings, grandstands, hotels and open-air picture venues. Robert Shand joined the practice in 1966, and it was named Howard Bonner Atkinson & Shand in 1968. Jack worked as a partner in the practice from 1953 to 1969.

In late 1969 Jack was appointed to the academic staff of the Department of Architecture at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT), which had morphed out of PTC, to commence in January 1970. But in December 1969 he was seconded to WAIT's administration as part of the implementation of new policy to manage its own capital development.

Thus whilst in the period 1970-1974 Jack acted as a part-time lecturer in architectural practice and management in the Department of Architecture at WAIT, from 1970-1986 he was the WAIT Architect, initially with responsibility for management of WAIT's capital development. This responsibility was extended to include oversight of Building Maintenance and Services, Grounds and Landscaping, and other Campus Services.

As the WAIT Architect, he was involved in the completion in 1971 of the new Architecture Building, designed by fellow PTC graduate Vin Davies (1928-2010).



Sketch design for Architecture Building at WAIT, photo as completed (Curtin University School of Architecture archives – *Gazette*, June 1968, p16; cover of opening booklet)



Jack Finney on site with sculptor Tom Bass in centre and PWD architect Vin Davies at right. (Curtin University School of Architecture archives - opening booklet p.6).

In an introductory note to a later CV, Jack recorded his own thoughts on the commencement of his involvement with architecture at WAIT, and later activity: *I decided on a change of direction after nearly 20 years with the Howard Bonner practice. I had been approached by a staff member to consider an academic*

*appointment at WAIT as there was a need for someone to take responsibility for the area of architectural practice and management. I was not committed to the idea of becoming a career academic, but thought that it could be an interim move while I used the right of private practice to develop my own practice.*

*I obtained the academic appointment, but a month before I was due to start, I was hijacked by WAIT Administration into the role of Campus Architect, and there I remained for 17 years, becoming something of a specialist in Tertiary Institutional planning. ... During this period at WAIT, and for another 8 years after my retirement when I acted in a private capacity as Project Coordinator for capital development at Kalgoorlie and Hedland TAFE Colleges, I was in effect an "employer of architects" rather than "the architect" of the numerous projects designed and constructed under my oversight.*

So in the period 1980-1986 Jack conducted a consultancy service through the WAIT Architect's Office to provide project coordination of capital development to independently governed Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions at Kalgoorlie and Hedland. In 1984 he was seconded to the University of South Pacific for three months to carry out a space utilisation study of existing buildings of the Suva Campus in Fiji. And in 1987-1995, after his retirement from WAIT he continued in a private capacity as project coordinator of capital development at Kalgoorlie (finished involvement in 1988) and Hedland TAFE Colleges.

With a long involvement in activities of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA), Jack was made an Associate in 1953, a Fellow in 1966, and Life Fellow in 1989. He was a councillor of the RAIA WA Chapter 1962-1970, and a member of the WA Practice Committee 1973-1985. Amongst other professional and community contributions were Jack's involvement as a Board Member of the Architects Board of Western Australia 1970-1975, an Elder in the Presbyterian Church and Uniting Church 1956-1996, and with the Presbyterian Ladies College council and building committee 1970-1986.

Jack Finney died aged 91 years on 1 November 2017 at 'Kingla', Bentley – 'dearly loved husband of Dot for 65 years; father of Barbara, Catherine, Rick and Tim; father-in-law of Simon, Peter, and Eliane; grandfather of nine; great-grand-father of nine'.

It is important to recognise that prior to the First World War, the overwhelming majority of architects in WA had been born and trained elsewhere. This gradually changed during the Inter-War years (1919-1939), as more locally born individuals studied whilst under articulated arrangements with senior practitioners. Finney was amongst the new breed of architects in WA in the highly-charged post Second World War 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 to absorb further international developments in architecture. They developed distinctive local domestic and commercial styles, now gaining further study and recognition.

References:

NAA: B2455, FINNEY J S; Finney John Spence : SERN 3399 : POB Castlemaine VIC : POE Perth WA : NOK M Finney Mary McKay.

'Marriages', *Western Mail*, 18 December 1919, p.26, (John Spence Finney and Doris Jane Hatch).

'Births', *Western Mail*, 1 September 1921, p.27, (sister Doris Jean at Mount Lawley).

'Births', *The West Australian*, 26 January 1924, p.1, (sister Norma Clare at Mount Lawley).

'Births', *The West Australian*, 13 February 1926, p.1, (of John Spence jnr at Mount Lawley).

'Births', *The West Australian*, 21 December 1932, p.1, (sister Edna Mary at Bridgetown).

'Guildford Wedding', *The West Australian*, 7 April 1952, p.8, (at Methodist Church Guildford).

NAA: B884, W69135; FINNEY JOHN SPENCE : Service Number - W69135 : Date of birth - 22 Oct 1885 : POB - CASTLEMAINE VIC : POE - NORTH PERTH WA : NOK - FINNEY DORIS

NAA: A9301, 441854; FINNEY JOHN SPENCE : Service Number - 441854 : Date of birth - 10 Feb 1926 : POB - MT LAWLEY WA : POE - PERTH WA : NOK - FINNEY JOHN

'Visions and Voices: Curtin University Celebrates 50 Years of Architectural Education 1946-1996', ed. Barbara van Bronswijk, School of Architecture Construction and Planning, Curtin University of Technology, Bentley, WA, 1996, p.53.

'Directory of Architects and Buildings in WA 1945-96', questionnaire completed by Jack Finney for Simon Anderson at UWA in 1996.

Pers comm. Tim Finney August 2022.

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Heritage Committee meeting approval date: 18 August 2022 Last updated: 18 August 2022

**Citation details:**

Taylor, Dr John J., 'John Spence Finney (1926-2017)', *Western Australian Architect Biographies*, <http://www.taylorarchitects.com.au/Biographies.html> accessed DATE.