

Ray Strauss (*Mirror*, 16 January 1954, p.16; UWA Hockey Club Facebook)

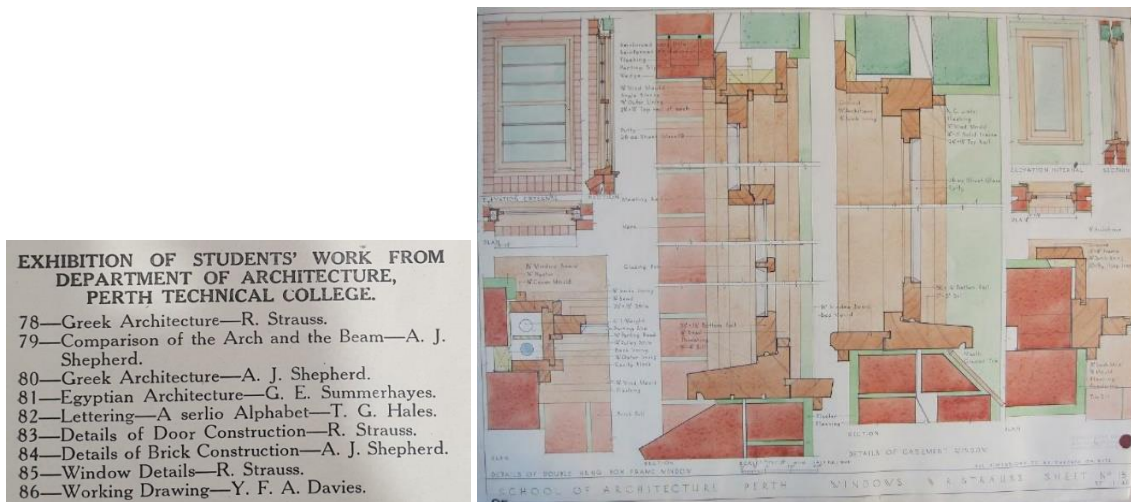
Raymond Bernard Strauss (1927-2013) was born 4 November 1927 at Newcastle Street in Perth, to parents Diderick (Eric) Henry and Muriel Georgina (nee Atkins) Strauss, who had married in 1919 at St Oswald's Anglican Church, Meekatharra. Their first son Eric Charles was born in 1919. The family moved to Perth where Eric senior initially started a blacksmith and coach building business at Subiaco. Ray attended primary school at North Perth, and then Perth Modern School during the Second World War (1939-1945). As an eighteen year old, Ray elected to enrol in the very first year of the newly-founded five year architecture course at Perth Technical College (PTC) in 1946.

Prior to the Second World War, 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.

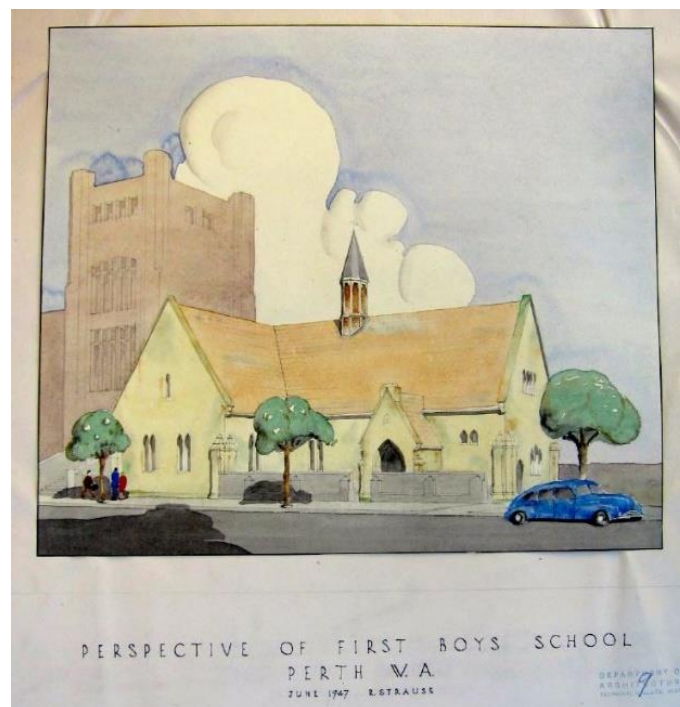
Robertson had attended meetings of the Modern Architectural Research Society (MARS) in Sydney in the early 1940s, and through him the society's philosophies had an obvious influence on the nature of the course at PTC. The war had made housing a major consideration, and a practical objective of industrialization for the Modern Movement. Robertson was also strongly oriented to construction and practical aspects, and the curriculum he organized

was accordingly a very practical one. But as has been elucidated by Geoffrey London and Duncan Richards in the late twentieth-century study *Modern Houses*, the major post-war architectural style inspiration on the west coast of Australia was derived from British (particularly London) and Continental sources, leading to a regionally distinctive form of architectural modernism.

In the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) WA Chapter exhibition of 1947, a number of Ray's drawings were selected from PTC student works for display, marking him as an exceptional talent.



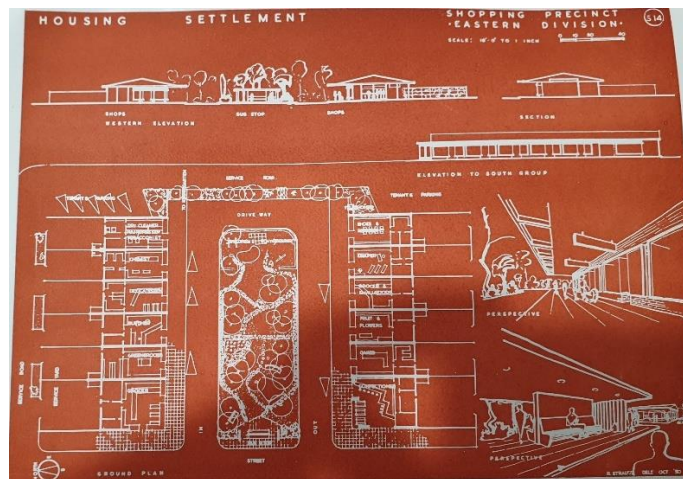
Ray Strauss' work featured in 3 of 9 PTC student examples exhibited by the RAIA in 1947; window details dated 27.11.46 (1947 RAIA WA exhibition catalogue, p.19; Jonathan Strauss).



Strauss' water coloured perspective of Perth Boys School, June 1947 (Jonathan Strauss).

The seven fifth-year students of the PTC architecture course in 1950 were given a town-planning exercise in their final term – to design a housing settlement for a 469 acre (190 ha) site nine miles (14.5 km) north from Perth on the Wanneroo Road. Strauss and his fellows undertook a preliminary survey, assessed needs and finally tabulated a list of areas, numbers and descriptions of buildings etc. A comprehensive description of the students' work was soon published in *Phi*, the Architectural Students Assoc of WA magazine, and concluded with the optimism of the young post war architects:

“We have not only designed a housing settlement with an extremely high standard of living, but a feasible, practical scheme which should be put into operation. An environment such as this, with ample open space, would express the natural freedom of the Australian way of life. ...



Strauss' Housing Settlement on Wanneroo Road shopping precinct – PTC final year project
(*Phi*, Architectural Students Assoc of WA, 1950, p.17)



Strauss' Housing Settlement on Wanneroo Road, Anglican Church – PTC final year project
(*Phi*, Architectural Students Assoc of WA, 1950, p.26)

The results of the annual examinations for the associateship course at PTC were announced in *The West Australian* newspaper in mid-December 1950, and the very first graduates of the course were feted by their friends as the 'magnificent seven'. Stuart Coll, Vin Davies, John Hallam, Gil Nicol, Alan Shepherd, Ray Strauss and Geoff Summerhayes had passed the final four units of the course. Ray soon registered as an architect with the Architects Board of WA in 1951 (reg. no. 220) in concert with his fellow PTC graduates: Davies 215, Nicol 216, Shepherd 217, Summerhayes 218, Hallam 219, and Coll 221.

Strauss joined the Public Works Department (PWD) as a cadet architect under Albert 'Paddy' Clare (1894-1975), Principal Architect of the PWD from 1930 to 1960. Ray progressed through the State Government organisation and eventually became a senior design architect. He also chose to study engineering at the University of Western Australia (UWA) in the 1950s, whilst busy with sporting pursuits. Ray was an exceptional sportsman who played both cricket and field hockey at high levels. He played for the UWA hockey club. Twice named captain of the all-Australian universities side, he was captain of the UWA side on several occasions, including when the team shared the 1952 Syme Cup. Strauss represented WA on various occasions from 1949 to 1955, and made his Test debut for the Australian national team in August 1954, against New Zealand.



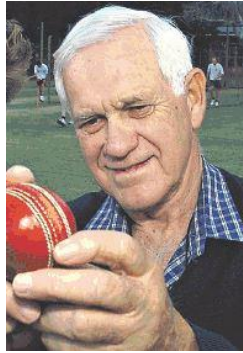
Captain of the University A1 hockey team, Ray Strauss providing hockey tips to two 21 year old Sikh engineering students, Santokh and Inder Singh (*The West Australian*, 9 May 1952, p.15)

Playing cricket first for East Perth and then University at WACA district level, Strauss made his first-class debut for the WA team at the end of the 1952–53 season, playing against the touring Australian and South African national teams. Opening the bowling against the South Africans, he took 7/75 in the side's second innings. A regular in the WA Sheffield Shield side throughout the remainder of the 1950s, Strauss took 25 wickets in a season on three separate occasions. His best bowling figures came during the 1956–1957 season in the opening match against South Australia, when he took 7/59 from 18 eight-ball overs. He finished that season with 33 wickets, the most of any fast bowler and second only to Victoria's Lindsay Kline (37 wickets) overall.

Having played his last matches for WA during the 1959–1960 season, Strauss spent both the 1960 and 1961 English seasons as the professional player for the East Lancashire Cricket Club in the Lancashire League. East Lancashire made the final of the Worsley Cup (the league's knockout competition) in both seasons, winning in 1961. Strauss took five-wicket hauls in both years, as well as scoring a half-century in the 1960 loss. In league matches, Strauss took the most wickets for the club in both seasons, as well as leading the club's runs aggregates in the 1960 season. His 104 wickets during that season was only bettered by West Indies international Roy Gilchrist. When playing cricket in Lancashire, he undertook architectural work during the winters, both in England (at the Building Design Partnership), and at Malmo in Sweden.

Back in WA at the PWD, Straus worked on a number of country schools around the State, but he was mainly designing hospital complexes – with Rockingham ('greenfield' site), Osborne Park and Queen Elizabeth II at Nedlands amongst them, although Fremantle Hospital was his biggest and longest running project. Ray, who had worked at the PWD for over thirty years before its demise on 30 June 1985, was among a number of senior architects who retired from the public service soon after the creation of the PWD's successor, the Building Management Authority.

Ray Strauss and Thelma Maureen Strickland were married in April 1953 at St Peter's Church in Victoria Park, they had children Jonathan (who also became an architect) b.1956, Merranie b.1958, Christopher b.1961 and Richard b.1962. Maureen passed away in 2003, and Ray died 28 July 2013 aged 85 years.



Ray Strauss in later years (*The West Australian*, 29 July 2013, p.74)

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. Strauss was one of the first of 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 together to absorb further international developments in modern architecture. They developed distinctive local domestic and commercial styles, now gaining further study and recognition.

References:

- 'Wedding Bells', *Daily Telegraph* (Meekatharra), 16 May 1919, p.2 (marriage Muriel and Eric).
 'Approaching Marriage', *The West Australian*, 8 April 1953, p.13 (marriage Roy and Maureen).
 Le Page, J.S.H., *Building a State*, Water Authority of Western Australia, 1986, p.636.
 London, Geoffrey and Richards, Duncan; *Modern Houses: Architect-designed Houses in Western Australia from 1950 to 1965*, School of Architecture, UWA, 1997, pp.2-3.
 'Strauss a champion of swing bowling', *The West Australian*, 29 July 2013, p.74.
 'Ray Strauss', www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Strauss, accessed 20 January 2021.

Contributing author: John Taylor

Heritage Committee meeting approval date: 20 May 2021 Last updated: 20 May 2021

Citation details:

Taylor, Dr John J., 'Raymond Bernard Strauss (1927-2013)', *Western Australian Architect Biographies*, <http://www.taylorarchitects.com.au/Biographies.html> accessed DATE.