



'Morrie' Fairbrother c.1950s (AIA WA e-news 19 October 2022)

Richard Morris Fairbrother (1928-2022) was born 14 April 1928 at the Hutchinson Hospital, Gawler, South Australia. Parents Victor Morris (1901-1983) and Ida nee Richards (1898-1992) Fairbrother had married at St Augustine's Church, Unley in April 1927. Victor was on the staff at Roseworthy Agricultural College, located 50 km north of Adelaide, and 8 km north of Gawler. The family moved to Perth, Western Australia when Morris ('Morrie') was eight years old. Morrie's early education was at Highgate Primary School, and he finished high school at Perth Modern in 1948. In the same year his mother Ida was appointed to sit on the Children's Court Bench at Perth, Fremantle and Midland Junction.



Morrie Fairbrother – centre of photo - competing against visiting French athlete A.J. Marie - at right - in the 120 yards hurdles at Leederville Oval (*Sunday Times*, 18 March 1951, p.24).

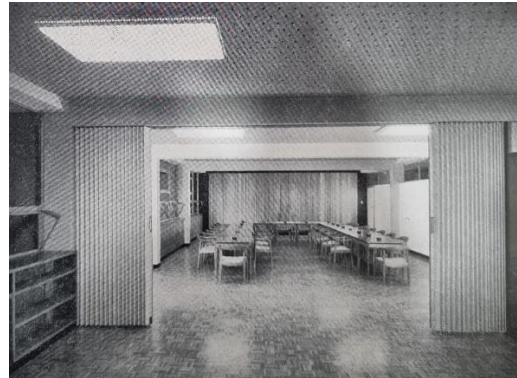
A State-level athlete, Morrie entered the School of Architecture at Perth Technical College (PTC) under the directorship of William (Bill) H. Robertson (1905-1953). Robertson had assisted to launch the architectural course at PTC in 1946. Fairbrother completed his architectural studies in 1952 within a soon-to-be-influential class that included Gres Cohen, Alex Doepel, John Duncan, Jack Finney, John Lidbury, Eddie McMillan, Leslie Moon, Colin Nicholas, Dennis Silver, Bill Waters and John White. Morrie's exam results were published in *The West Australian* during late December 1952, and the close-knit graduate group were shocked when Bill Robertson died 9 March 1953, aged just 48 years.



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

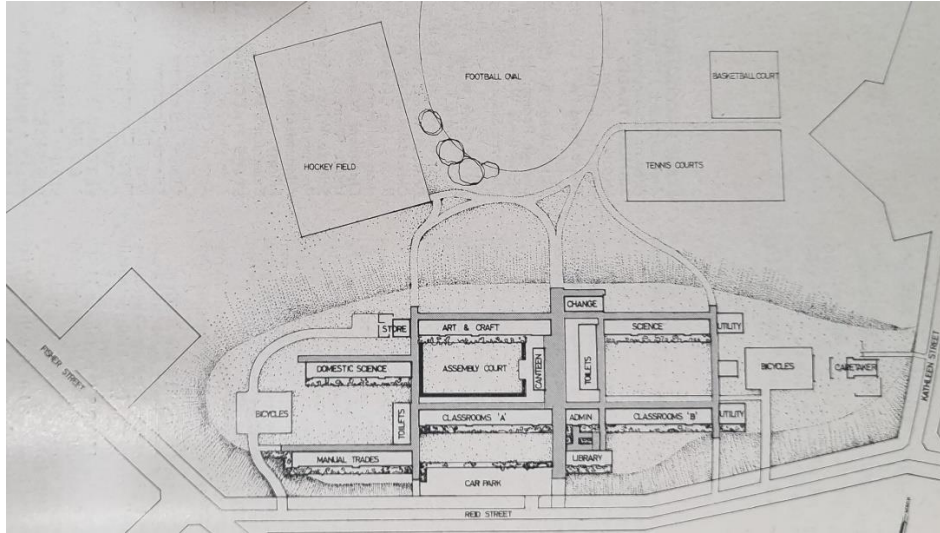
Back: Peter Bruechle, Don Collins, Jack Finney, Bob Lyon, Ross Chisholm, Bill Weedon, Alex Doepel
 M: Arch Jones, Ron Facius, Gus Ferguson, Col Nicholas, Morris Fairbrother, Scott Thompson, Bill Angove
 Front: Eddie McMillan, Bill Waters, Bill Robertson, John Lidbury, Bob Day, Ted Cartwright
 (Bill Weedon noted in 2021 that Bill Angove – a photographer – set up this image with a timer and then joined the group in the photo, taken at UWA's James Oval).

Fairbrother was registered (no. 243) with the Architects Board of Western Australia (ABWA) in December 1952. He became an Associate member of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) in 1953. Morrie married Margaret Ruth Allan in 1954 and they moved to London, where he was to work on a new John Lewis store in Oxford Street. Upon returning to Australia, he joined Dennis Silver (1929-) in practice. Silver had commenced in partnership with Jeffrey W.H. Howlett (1928-2005) during 1953-1955, and was joined by Morrie from 1957 to 1963 in the firm Silver, Fairbrother & Associates.



Silver, Fairbrother & Associates' Civil Service Association Office Building at Irwin Street Perth
 (*The Architect*, September 1959, pp.20-21).

Silver, Fairbrother & Associates' housing design won first prize in the Commonwealth Games Village architectural competition of 1961, leading to the construction of over fifty houses in Floreat Park, a number of which are extant in relatively original form. By 1964 the Fairbrother family were resident at nearby 23 Glengariff Drive Floreat, which became the lifetime family home.



Silver, Fairbrother & Associates' site plan for Cyril Jackson High School, Ashfield, Bassendean (further details and photos in *The Architect*, March 1964, p.33-35).

Fairbrother moved from Silver, Fairbrother & Associates to the Public Works Department architectural division in 1964, ending his time there as the Assistant Principal Architect in charge of the design and development of the G Block hospital at the Sir Charles Gardiner Medical Centre.



'Morrie' Fairbrother c.1969 (RAIA WA)

Morrie was always involved with sub committees of the RAIA. Made a Fellow of the RAIA in 1966, he was President of the RAIA (WA) in 1969-1970, and awarded Life Fellowship in 1971. He eventually retired from practicing architecture as he had significant other involvements - as a chair of boards with business ventures, as well as undertaking voluntary work with the National Archives. Morrie

maintained his ABWA registration until 1995. Playing golf and fishing were his hobbies in retirement, as well as redesigning the family holiday home. His father Victor died in February 1983 at Joondanna aged 82 years, and mother Ida passed away in May 1992 at Mount Lawley aged 94 years. Morris died on 27 September 2022 very peacefully, surrounded by his dearly loved family.

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 articled arrangements with senior practitioners. Fairbrother 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:

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- 'Manunda From Eastern States', *The West Australian*, 8 September 1936, p.11 (V.M. Fairbrother).
- '3 Women to sit on Bench', *Daily News*, 15 July 1948, p.4 (Ida at Stoneham Street Joondanna).
- 'Shots of Athletics', *Sunday Times*, 20 November 1949, p.7 (Morrie hurdling at Leederville).
- 'Social Notes', *Phi*, Architectural Association of WA, 1951, p.31 ('Morry' Fairbrother, 'Nick' Silver).
- 'They Are Engaged', *The West Australian*, 23 August 1952, p.12 (Curtis-Fairbrother).
- 'They Are Engaged', *The West Australian*, 1 May 1953, p.22 (Allan-Fairbrother).
- 'Contributors', *The Architect*, March 1965, p.26 (Dennis Silver).
- 'Fading Events and Places: The Architecture of the VII British Empire and Commonwealth Games Village and Perry Lakes Stadium – Exhibition and Catalogue', Hannah Lewi & Stephen Neille, *The Architect*, 2005/03, pp.12-13.
- 'Vale Morris Fairbrother LFRAIA 1928-2022', AIA (WA) e-news 19 October 2022, info from Fairbrother Family.

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