

Geoff Summerhayes (*The West Australian*, 12 April 1951, p.4; AIA WA, c.1970,)

Geoffrey Edwin Summerhayes (1928-2010) was born with his twin sister Eve 15 September 1928 at South Perth to parents Reginald (1897-1965) and Sheila (nee Durack, 1903-1989) Summerhayes. Reg and Sheila had married at St Patrick's Church, Havelock Street West Perth in November 1927. Geoff's grandfather, London-born architect Edwin Summerhayes (1868-1944), had in 1894 fled economic recession on the east coast and moved from Melbourne to seek greater opportunities in gold-boom Western Australia. Reg initially studied engineering at the University of Western Australia (UWA), and after working in Asia as an architect during the early 1920s, joined his father in practice at Perth in 1926, where they worked together until Edwin's retirement in 1934.

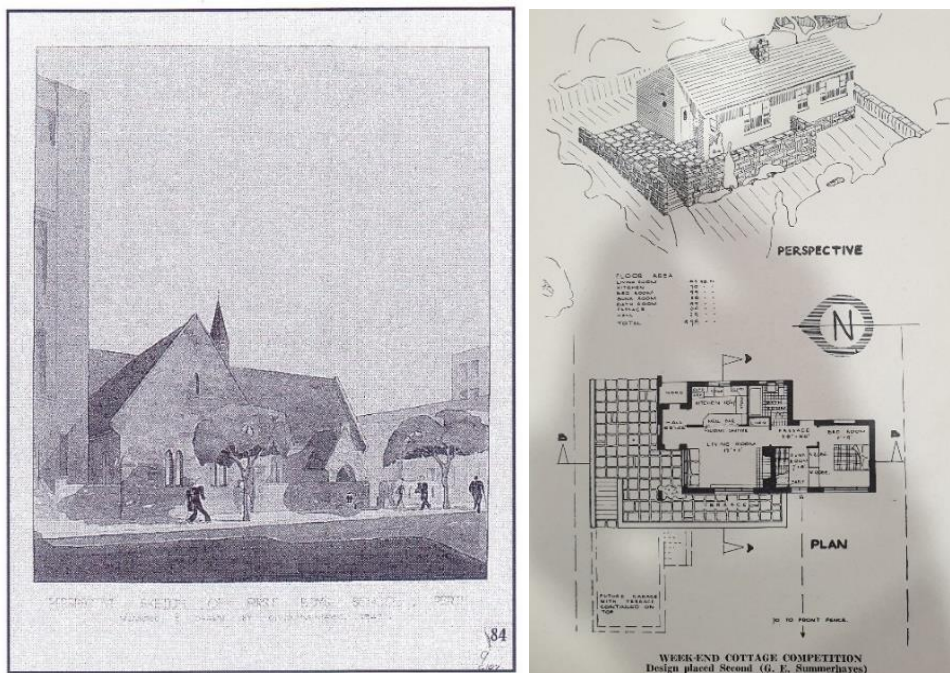


Sheila Summerhayes with 7-year-old twins Eve and Geoff (*Western Mail*, 23 April 1936, p.27)

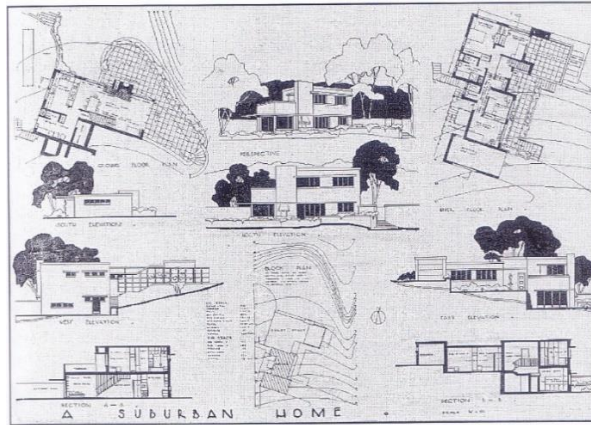
Geoff attended primary school at Loreto Convent in Claremont and then Aquinas College at Mount Henry, where he completed his high school studies in 1945. With his family background in architecture, and following the cessation of the hostilities of the Second World War (1939-1945), seventeen year old Geoff elected to enrol in the newly-founded (1946) five year architecture course at Perth Technical College (PTC), rather than learn within the family practice.

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.

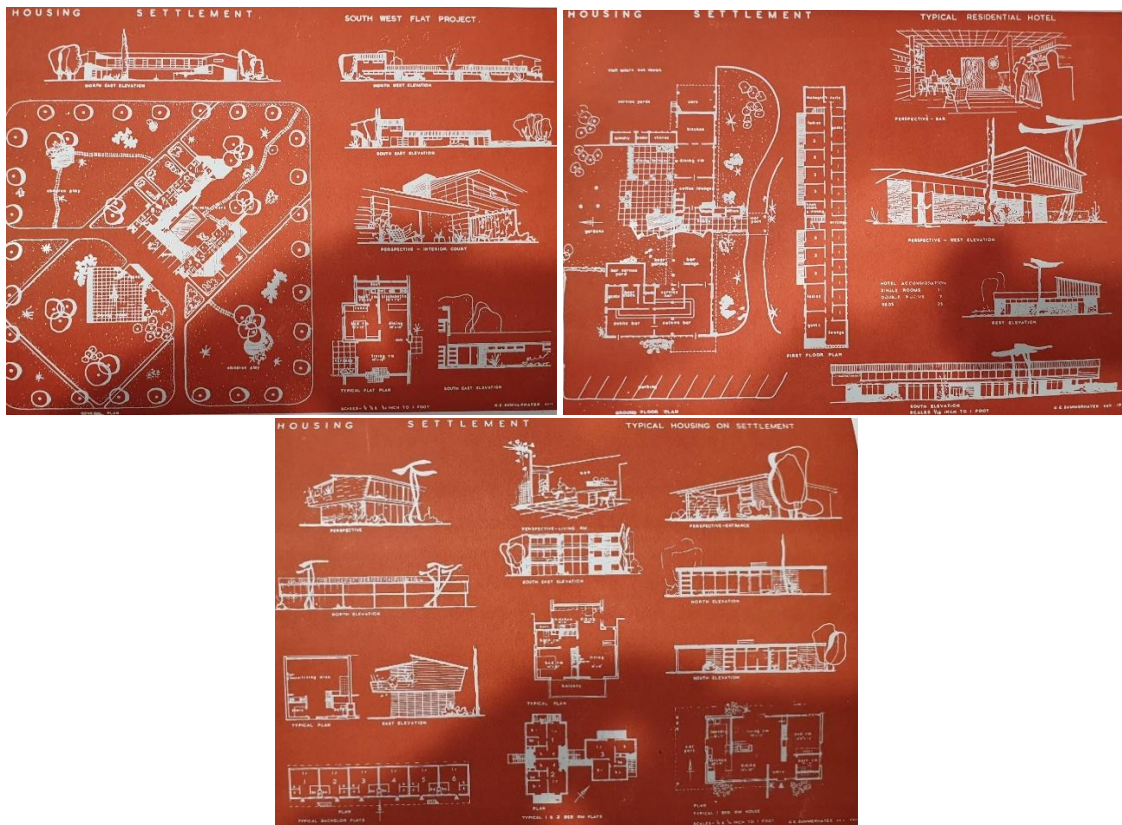


Geoff Summerhayes' 1947 watercolour sketch of Perth Boys School (*Visions and Voices*, p.14); 2nd place design in Week-End Cottage Competition (1947 RAIWA exhibition catalogue, n.p.).



Geoff Summerhayes' 1948 'A Suburban Home' design (*Visions and Voices*, p.37).

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. Geoff soon registered as an architect with the Architects Board of WA during early 1951 (reg. no. 218) in concert with his fellow PTC graduates: Davies 215, Nicol 216, Shepherd 217, Hallam 219, Strauss 220, and Coll 221.



Geoff Summerhayes' final year PTC drawings for a group project (*Phi* 1951, pp.20, 22, 25)

In April 1951 Geoff embarked on a cargo ship at Fremantle, travelling in this most thrifty way to undertake an architectural study tour of Europe. He intended to visit England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Arriving at Port Aden enroute, he was thrilled to learn he had been granted a Lowell M. Palmer Fellowship to study at Princeton University in New Jersey USA. Inspired by all that he saw in Great Britain and on the Continent, Geoff crossed the Atlantic to commence a Master's Degree in Architecture at Princeton in September 1951.

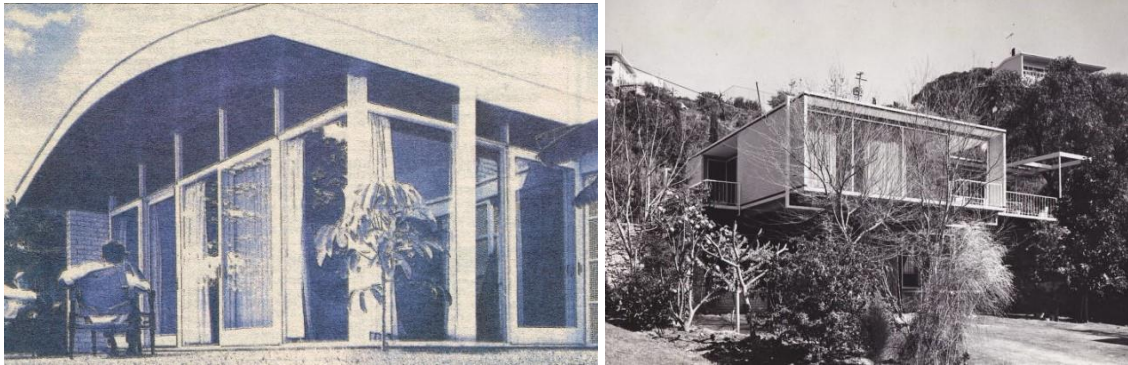
Geoff's modern design style was further influenced by his studies of 1951-1952 at Princeton, which was a hub for European academics and intellectuals in the post war period. He gained further work experience at Micklewright & Mountford in Trenton, New Jersey, and then on his way back to Australia, at Kump & Associates in San Francisco. The USA shaped his career, and he later noted that: "Postgraduate education in America amid the influence of some of the most avant-garde of the early 50s in architecture, furthered my delight to create in a simple and elegant manner."



Stewarts and Lloyds 140 Stirling Highway North Fremantle in 1957 and 1965 (SLWA 239187PD, 227268PD)

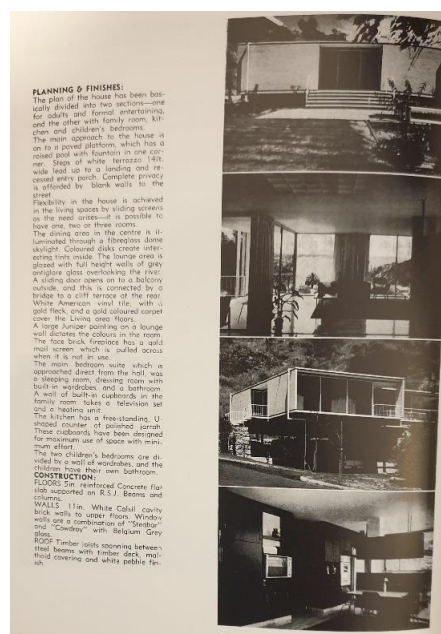
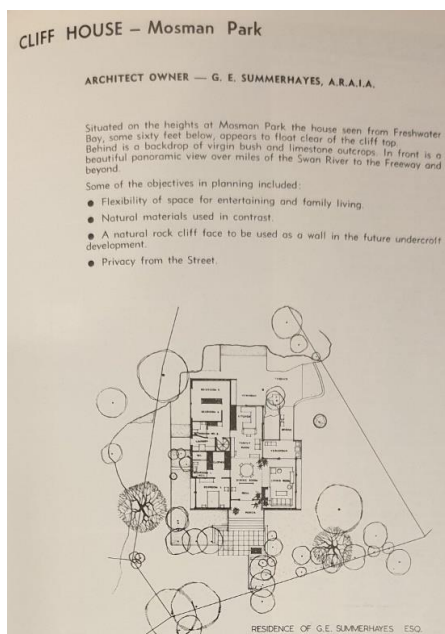
Returning to WA, he joined his father Reg in practice during 1953. It is highly probable that the design style of the Stewarts & Lloyds building at 140 Stirling Highway, North Fremantle was the responsibility of the younger Summerhayes in the practice. The client brief suited the modernist style, and the design proved to be extremely successful. The completion of the Stewarts and Lloyds building seemed to build a bridge between Geoff and his father, with 'old-school' Reg gradually accepting Geoff's design philosophy at the commercial level and granting further influence to the enthusiastic young architect.

Geoff's work can be seen to have fallen into two main categories. First, a string of fine modern residential projects in the western suburbs of Perth, recognised in two *The West Australian* Home of the Year awards: the Agnew House at Pearse Street in Cottesloe, and his family's home, built in 1961 at 3 The Coombe in Mosman Park (demolished 2005).



Agnew House Cottesloe, 1962 *The West Australian* Home of the Year Award winner (*The West Australian*, 14 December 1963, p.2); and Summerhayes House at The Coombe Mosman Park, 1963 *The West Australian* Award of Merit winner (Docomomo Australia).

Architectural historian Duncan Richards recognized the value of Geoff's and his good friend Ross Chisholm's design of adjacent homes for their families: "As is often the case in the history of architectural development, the high points of modern architecture in WA occurred in this period, a time when the modern movement was in decline, with notable houses in The Coombe, Mosman Park, by Geoff Summerhayes (1961) and Ross Chisholm (1963)."



Summerhayes House (*Modern Houses*, pp.69-70; *The Architect*, September 1963 pp.24-25)

The second category of Geoff's design career was marked by the office's exceptional commercial work, including the CBH office building at Delhi Street in West Perth; City Arcade in the Perth CBD; and 3-5 Bennett Street Perth offices developed with a business consortium and housing the practice for some time. These resulted from the expansion of the firm with Darryl Way (1937-2016), then Summerhayes Way and Associates, where they led a team of young architects. Recognition of this work included a 1969 RAI A citation for the CBH building; 1970 RAI A citation for Bennett Street offices; 1973 Clay Brick Award for the Chelsea Village - tavern and shops at Nedlands; and 1979 Design Award (with the PWD) for the documentation of the Art Gallery of WA.



2 Bindaring Parade Claremont apartments of 1969 (School of Architecture UWA).

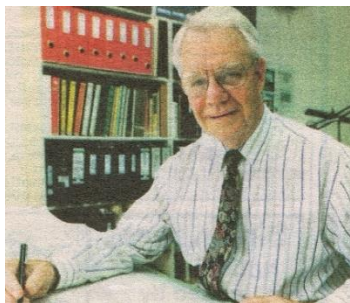
Along with these commercial builds in the 1970s, the office completed private homes for many Perth 'entrepreneurs' including Alan Bond, Peter Beckwith, Brian Coppin, Dallas Dempster, John Roberts and Roland Smith. Most of these homes are still in existence; however, many have had substantial renovations over subsequent years. The Holmes à Court house and Heytesbury Stud at Keysbrook won a 1987 Bunnings Architecture Award for the use of timber. Another wealthy client that brought further significant design commissions for Geoffrey was the iron ore tycoon Michael Wright. In 1991, Wright and Geoff took a trip to South Africa to document and observe wineries, tourist hotels and restaurants. Geoff had last visited Cape Town for a week in 1985, sent by Robert Holmes a Court to look at Cape Dutch architecture. It was another exciting and fulfilling time from a design perspective. But Geoff returned to WA to find that Darryl Way was unhappy with the progression of the firm. It was decided that they pursue their own paths, and 63 year old Geoff commenced his own sole practice in offices at Peppermint Grove.

Geoff enjoyed working on the Voyager Estate at Margaret River for Wright, modifying the Cape Dutch idiom to suit the requirements for a modern winery.



Voyager Estate at Margaret River (www.voyagerestate.com.au, Margaret River's Architecture of Terroir | ArchitectureAU)

In 1992 the School of Architecture & Fine Arts at UWA commenced an important series of annual architectural exhibitions, initially at the Lawrence Wilson Gallery and then the Cullity Gallery, in which local architects and their work were studied seriously, often for the first time. The exhibitions commenced with Jeffrey Howlett (1992), followed by Geoffrey Summerhayes (1993), Gordon Finn (1995), Krantz & Sheldon (1996), and in 'From Pillar to Post' (1996) the school reviewed its own history, in an exhibition of student and professional work of graduates of the school over three decades.



Geoff Summerhayes in the 2000s (*The West Australian*, 4 October 2010, p.34)

In more recent times, UWA academic Simon Anderson has noted that:

Summerhayes' best known works from his varied practice are his 'white box' houses and commercial buildings. ... Although they seem like white boxes at the first impression, these buildings always contain highly developed, even tense asymmetries in the planning and spatial arrangements and great textual richness such as the use of white-painted off-form concrete. His work always has powerful public-private delineations and a controlled openness to the sun, light and space of WA.

In private life, Geoff married Joslyn Mary Hayes in 1958, the couple had children Geoffrey Edward b.1958 and Andrina Josephine b.1960. With the first marriage breaking down in 1975, he later remarried, to Elizabeth Anne O'Neil in 1993. In professional circles, he was made an associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) in 1951, a Fellow in 1968, and Life Fellow in 1971. Geoff gave great service to the architectural profession as RAIA (WA) President 1967-1968, on Federal Council 1965-71, and as Federal Secretary in 1970.

Numerous community service roles included acting as President of the Association for the Blind of WA, on the Perth Rotary Club, Art Gallery of WA Board, YMCA fund raising committee, National Trust of Australia WA, and for the Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem. In 1977 Geoff was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal for community service, and recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia in 1998. Acknowledging his special endeavours outside of his professional work, Geoff was the recipient of the Architects Board of Western Australia Award in 1983, and he served as a Board Member 1999-2005.

With grandfather Edwin and father Reg, Geoff Summerhayes is a part of one of Western Australia's most distinguished architect families, rivalling the twentieth century influence of the Hobbs, Cohens, Fitzhardinges, Parrys and Chisholms. The three generations of architects in the Summerhayes family designed buildings for a wide range of functions and their many buildings reflect the development of building styles in Western Australia across the twentieth century. One of the most highly decorated and awarded architects in WA, Geoff Summerhayes died on 22 September 2010 at Claremont, aged 82 years.

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. Geoff Summerhayes 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.

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