

CELEBRATING  
**WG** 50  
YEARS  
WOOD & GRIEVE ENGINEERS

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from little **BIG** grow...  
things THINGS



Tony Wood



Kip Grieve

## WOOD & GRIEVE ENGINEERS 1961-2011:

*celebrating 50 years of exceptional service and excellence in engineering*

Founded on 13 March 1961, Wood and Grieve Engineers was a partnership between Tony Wood and Kip Grieve, two young engineers who first met at UWA in 1951. Initially the company provided structural and mechanical engineering services in Perth, Western Australia.

Fifty years on, Wood and Grieve provides a broad range of engineering services to a wide variety of building, land development and infrastructure projects throughout Australia.



THIS IS *their story*

Wood and Grieve's first office was at 51 Colin Street, West Perth. Part of an old house the office comprised a room, a stool, a phone line, a drafting board and a T-square. The plywood shingle out the front was hand-painted by Kip Grieve. Brenda Wood and Berwyn Grieve provided the secretarial and financial services from home, calling themselves the 'B&B secretaries'.

But it wasn't long before the demands of young families and a growing business meant that Tony and Kip had to bite the bullet and hire a real secretary, Annette Watts, and a draftsman, Sid Weston.

As with any new business the early years were tough, and Tony and Kip agreed that if their overdraft ever exceeded the combined value of their cars they would close the business and get a real job. Thankfully this never happened.

# growth on the back OF THE MINING BOOM

After those difficult early days Wood and Grieve experienced solid growth during the latter part of the 1960's, largely on the back of Western Australia's mining boom. In December 1960 the Commonwealth Government lifted the embargo on iron ore which was classified as a strategic material during World War II and couldn't be exported. Lifting the embargo provided a huge stimulus for exploration and development in WA. Investment in Perth surged and so did the demand for engineering services.

By 1969 the company employed 69 people and was in its fourth office. At this time Tony Nathan started

working for Wood and Grieve and the company formally established an electrical services section under his leadership.

With this rapid growth Tony and Kip realised they needed outside assistance to help manage what was becoming a reasonably large business. In the late 1960's they engaged PA management consultants and implemented a hand-operated system that recorded the number of hours spent on each job. Theo Newhouse, who joined the company in May 1969, was involved in computerising this system and its principles are still used at Wood and Grieve to this day.



*Tony Nathan*

- 1965 -

JOHN KIPLING GRIEVE

- and -

ANTHONY BURTON WOOD

"WOOD & GRIEVE"

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PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT  
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## business philosophies ...THE KEY TO SUCCESS

The 1970's was a period of consolidation during which Tony and Kip established key philosophies that have continued to guide the culture and ownership structure of the company as it evolved. They believed that people are the key to a successful business – both those you work with and those you do business with.

While it is important to have technically skilled engineers, it is also important that you like the people you work with. To this day employees of Wood and Grieve continue to be highly valued for their 'people skills', as well as their engineering expertise.

Similarly, clients are a critical asset of the company and Tony and Kip always believed that you should treat client's money as carefully as you would treat your own. As Tony Wood put it, "you should always think of

things from the client's point of view and not just from an engineering point of view".

In the beginning Wood and Grieve was a 50/50 partnership between Tony Wood and Kip Grieve and they always believed that the firm should remain privately owned.

Their philosophy was that you work best for yourself and not for other people and, as the company grew, they implemented a system whereby their most important employees became Associates and shared in the profits. In 1977 the company became a unit trust which provided a mechanism for staff to purchase units in the company. In 2009 the business changed to an unlisted public company and remains 100% owned by Wood and Grieve employees.



# COMPUTERS - *a quantum change*

In the 1970's Wood and Grieve was at the forefront of technology with the introduction of computers into the business. They started using computers when the University of Western Australia made timesharing available on their PDP6 computer, accessed using teletype consoles over the telephone. The next step was to install a Data General mini-computer followed by the purchase of individual PCs that were linked to central servers.

Wood and Grieve was one of the very first private companies in Western Australia to have its own computer and Tony Wood remarked, "this was a quantum change from using log tables and slide rules!"

It was also during this decade that Wood and Grieve began a civil engineering and land subdivision group under the management of John Tomlinson.

Again, this reflected broader economic and social changes at the time as there was a significant increase in the number of buildings approved for demolition and building in Perth in the early 1970's. However all was not rosy and the oil crisis in 1973 resulted in a lack of confidence in new projects and tough times for Wood and Grieve.



*John Tomlinson*



*Alan Jardine and Theo Newhouse*

# FOUNDING PARTNER *calls it a day*



Bob Mercer

After seeing its way through the oil crisis the company underwent a major change in leadership when founding partner Kip Grieve retired in July 1982.

Although Kip's retirement was a significant loss, the company continued on with Tony Wood at the helm for the next ten years. When Tony retired in July 1992, Bob Mercer became the second managing director of the company. When Bob retired 11 years later, in 2003, Mike Best became only the third managing director of the company which Tony Wood and Kip Grieve established 42 years earlier.

The early 1980's was a time of worldwide recession, followed by a boom in Western Australia during the mid and late 1980's,

due largely to the export of the Pilbara's mineral wealth.

Wood and Grieve also enjoyed increasing growth at this time and decided to expand interstate. In 1988 Shane McLinden started the company's first eastern states office in Sydney, offering structural services in conjunction with local firm Verge and Associates.



Mike Best

## *a time of* innovation and change

It was also a time of innovation and change during the 1980's, with Wood and Grieve's focus on marketing and Total Quality Management. The company determined that to keep growing it needed new and exciting marketing strategies and so appointed a non-engineer, Karen Hirdman, as Marketing Coordinator. Pam McKenna continued in this role from 1986-89, and recalls this as an example of how Wood and Grieve was, and continues to be, a progressive company utilising creative responses to problems.

However Wood and Grieve eventually realised that engineers are in fact the best people to market engineering services, so the role of marketing coordinator was made redundant and the project engineers were given the primary responsibility of winning and securing work – a philosophy which continues to this day.

Worldwide environmental concerns in the 1980's had a profound effect on engineering practice, and Wood and Grieve's quick response was to

employ an environmental engineer to address these new needs. The company also began energy audits in 1983 after achieving accreditation from the Commonwealth Government Enterprise Energy Audit Program. Thirty years later there is still a strong environmental focus as evidenced by Wood and Grieve's rapidly expanding Environmentally Sustainable Design groups throughout Australia.



Pam McKenna hard at work



Wood & Grieve's Building Projects management team. Bob Brockman (Industrial), Matt Davis (Electrical), Richard Goodbody (Structural), John Hesley (Mechanical), Terry Wood (Managing Director), Terry Nathan (Building Projects), Paul Gray (Mechanical), Peter Reynolds (Structural).



Deputy Premier Ian Taylor MLA presents the Quality Accreditation Certificate to Tony Wood and Bob Mercer.



# recession stalls growth

Wood and Grieve was affected by 'the recession we had to have' in the early 1990's and growth was stalled for several years.

The Sydney office closed after some difficult times in 1995 but was subsequently reopened in 2003 under the management of Athol Malone. In 2007 Joe Walsh became leader of the Sydney office and today he manages almost 30 people in New South Wales.

When business conditions improved Wood and Grieve again expanded eastwards, this time to Melbourne in 2001 with David Simpson as manager. Under David's leadership this office has flourished and currently employs over 60 staff. The eastern states expansion continued in 2005 when Wood and Grieve also opened an office in Brisbane, managed by Johan Sadie.

While the offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane have made Wood and Grieve a truly national firm, the company has also pursued opportunities in regional Western Australia. The

office in Albany opened in 1989 with John Tomlinson in charge and Busselton in 1996, headed up by Anthony McGrath. Both continue to be very successful branches of Wood and Grieve.

By the end of 2005 Wood and Grieve was going from strength to strength and its workforce exceeded 200 people. Even as the company grew it retained its commitment to client service excellence and this was rewarded when it won the prestigious Business Review Weekly Client Choice Award for Exceptional Service in 2006.

# 300 staff & growing

By 2007 Wood and Grieve employed over 300 staff, but the rapid rate of growth slowed considerably with the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. Despite this the company still managed to acquire a civil consultancy in Brisbane and take its first international steps by opening an office in China in 2008.

Three years later, and 50 years after the company was founded, staff numbers are again on the rise with almost 330 employees as at March 2011. As the economy recovers and work prospects pick up Wood and Grieve is again preparing for a period of solid growth.

Wood and Grieve looks forward to a future of continued growth and exceptional service is testimony to the business culture and philosophy established by Tony Wood and Kip Grieve fifty years ago. This legacy will help to continue the company's success into the next 50 years.

Wood and Grieve would like to thank Jane Davis for researching and drafting this document.

Jane Davis, Discussion with Tony Wood, 3/9/2010

Jane Davis, Discussion with Tony Wood, 3/9/2010

Jenny Gregory, City of Light: A History of Perth since the 1950s, City of Perth, WA, 2001, p. 199.

Jane Davis, Discussion with Pam McKenna, 17/12/2010

# the beginnings of wood & grieve and some other stuff

*(Written with a Grieve slant)*

## Uni Days

From memory, and the following is essentially all from memory, Wood and I first met when we both started an engineering degree at UWA in February 1951 – (in those days, certainly at Uni, we all called each other by our surnames).

Wood had completed his schooling at Wesley and I at Mod.

The courses for Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, all there

was available in Perth in those days, were the same until the end of third year. Wood then branched into Civil Engineering and I into Mechanical.

During the course, of course, we socialised together and also with some of the other students. In other words, we were friends.

All of the engineering courses, as standard, took five years to complete and this included one

term out in the field to obtain practical engineering experience in third year and another in fourth year.

Wood completed his Civil course at the end of 1955. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately) I failed a half unit in fourth year and was made to repeat the year. I say “maybe fortunately” because my failure and the necessity to repeat the year really shook me and made me pull my socks up. So that in my second

fourth year and my fifth year I topped the class (and so I bloody-well should have after having spent an extra year at it). I finally completed my Mechanical course at the end of 1956.

## Off to England

After we graduated, Wood and I, separately, both took off for England to obtain more experience – in engineering, I mean.

Wood left Perth in October 1956. He actually embarked on a cruise ship – of sorts – from Fremantle to Naples, bought a Vespa two-stroke scooter in Italy and rode it to London. In London he flatted in Barnes with Ian Baker (a science graduate from UWA), Bruce Barblett (a dentist from WA), another dentist by the name of Ian Hay, plus various extras from time to time.

I left Perth in June 1957 on a cruise ship bound for Naples, similar to Wood. I travelled with a couple of my longstanding friends from Perth, Robin Arndt (an architect) and Colin Kennedy (a pharmacist). I had been right through school with both of these guys. When the three of us alighted from the ship in Naples, we were met, as previously arranged, by another school friend, Norm Bacon (an economist from UWA), who had arrived in England some months earlier. Based on history, we weren't 100% sure that Norm

would turn up, but he actually did – surprisingly!!

Norm had purchased a secondhand black Morris Commercial ex-undertaker's van and driven it across from England to Naples to meet us. This vehicle had been used to cart coffins (and bodies, of course) from A to B prior to the actual funeral services. Some would say that this would have been most appropriate – for me.

This is the vehicle in which we were transported back to London. The back of the van had been fitted with a shelf about 450mm above the floor and the four of us slept in this, two on the shelf and two on the floor – on coffin rollers.

Once, in Venice, when we had left the vehicle unattended for a while, we returned to find that, in our absence, a local had appropriately written “Cassa Morta” with his finger on the very dusty rear window of the van – (this, of course, means “box for the dead”).

The trip to London took us about three weeks. I have to say that it wasn't all that comfortable.

When we arrived, the four of us obtained a flat not far from the Hammersmith Bridge and just around the corner from where Wood was living. Ultimately, when Colin Kennedy left our flat to go elsewhere, Wood moved in.

## Working in England

By the time I got to London, Wood already had a job with a firm of Consulting Engineers (W S Atkins & Partners). It took me only about three weeks to find an employer, which was very lucky because I had virtually run out of money.

My first job, which I kept for about six weeks, was hopeless – I was employed as a draftsman, working under an absolute halfwit. My second job was a vast improvement. It was with a firm of Consulting Engineers called Kennedy & Donkin. I was a research engineer and worked under an elderly ex-University lecturer by the name of Professor Kapp. He was a highly intelligent, extremely nice guy about 80 years old and he still had all his marbles. I hope I'm as good at that age. Present indications are that I've already “missed the boat”.

It is probably worth mentioning that at no stage did my work in the UK involve any building mechanical services. My jobs included complicated things like writing an article for the in-house journal entitled “Across Europe in a Hearse” and investigating “The Feasibility of Underground Compressed Air Storage for Peak Power Generation”. (NB: this is similar to pumped water storage.)

In London, Wood found, courted and married a lovely lady by the name of Brenda O'Shea who he ultimately brought back to Perth to live early in 1959. As a possible matter of interest, I was one of Wood's groomsmen at his wedding, complete with top hat and morning suit. Norm Bacon was best man.

### *Future in Mind*

Whilst in London, and with my future in mind, I kept in touch with an engineer in Perth by the name of Walter Tauss. Wally was one of only two consulting mechanical engineers in Perth at that time. He was also a lecturer in mechanical engineering design at UWA and had been lucky enough to try to teach me at one stage (in fourth year, I think). Just prior to my leaving London in late 1958, I had written to Wally about the possibility of a job with him when I returned. He responded by saying that he was actually looking for a good engineer at that time and that he would give me serious consideration – but that he was also considering another engineer by the name of Leo Addicoat who had graduated from UWA several years earlier. (Leo later joined forces with another graduate from UWA, Dave Norman, to become Norman & Addicoat, Consulting Mechanical Engineers – later Norman Disney & Young).

On the ship on the way home from England, I received a short sharp telegram from Wally which read “OK you're in”. This meant I had a job to come back to. I was elated. So I started with Wally Tauss, Consulting Mechanical Engineer, just after Christmas 1958.

There was only Wally and me (his right hand man) and a receptionist/typist. Several months later, he employed a draftsman by the name of Sid Weston, an ex-boilermaker from the Midland Workshops.

Wally specialised in consulting for building mechanical services including air conditioning, ventilation, refrigeration, steam services etc.

In the meantime, Wood had returned to a job he was working in when he had left to go to England. This was with Architects Forbes & Fitzhardinge, as one of their two structural engineers.

### *A Generous Offer*

Towards the end of 1960, after having spent about two happy years with Wally as his right hand man, I was quite taken aback one morning when he said to me “I've had enough of this engineering business. What I would really like to do is go back to UWA, further my studies in Psychology (which he was doing part-time) and

then become a lecturer in that department”. He further said to me “Would you like to continue on with the engineering business, by yourself, totally without me? I'll give you all of the work we have in hand and you can pay me for all of the work we have actually completed at the changeover date, when you ultimately receive payment from the clients”.

I was stunned – quite taken aback. “What an extremely generous offer,” I thought. However, I was very nervous – scared actually – about the prospect of running a consulting engineering business with only about two years experience, in that field, behind me.

I talked it all over with a few of my friends (including Noel Chrystal, architect with Jim Johnson) and they all enthusiastically believed I should “take the bull by the horns” and accept Wally's offer – “what a lucky break” they all thought. I was still very apprehensive and undecided.

When Tony Wood – still working at Forbes & Fitzhardinge – got to hear about Wally Tauss' generous offer to me, he was quite excited. Apparently he saw this as a chance to stop working for somebody else – an opportunity to get into his own business, or at least to share in a business with somebody else. So he suggested that he and I become partners.

### *Wood & Grieve*

I guess the thought of having a partner to talk to, to discuss problems with and to share the responsibility with was the catalyst I needed to overcome my nervousness and lack of confidence. Anyhow, after some persuasive talk from Wood, this is what we decided to do – to form an equal partnership, with Wood as the Civil partner and I as the Mechanical partner.

We tossed a coin to decide what the new firm would be called – and Wood won. So the firm was (and still is, 50 years later) called WOOD & GRIEVE.

(If Wood hadn't won the toss we probably would have still called the firm the same, because Wood'n Grieve sounds somewhat better than Grieve'n Wood – although, sometimes along the way he could well have been grieve'n).

So on 13 March 1961, the firm of Wood & Grieve, Consulting Engineers opened its doors. I believe we were the youngest consulting engineers in Australia – if not the World – with Wood at 28 and me at 27.

Our first office was located in a small portion of an old house at 51 Colin Street, West Perth. We sub-leased the space from Eric Moyle, Architect. We also shared his

typist/receptionist on a time basis. I actually handmade our shingle to fix onto our entrance door frame. It was made of plywood, painted black with hand-painted white lettering. Unfortunately for the annals of history or, if you like the W&G museum, this original sign has been diced, by me, along the way.

With the work Wally Tauss had given me, a couple of PJs which Wood brought with him (including a workshop building for Mick Carratti), a modicum of new work and, of course, our well-known ability, it looked as though we could comfortably survive our first year.

At that time, I was unmarried and had virtually no responsibilities. On the other hand, Wood was married, had two kids and had recently completed building a new house in Attadale, complete with mortgage. So, because of his greater financial requirements, together with an anticipated cash liquidity problem within the business, we agreed that Wood's drawings from the firm should be twice mine and we would sort out the difference later, finances permitting. We also agreed, according to Wood (and this I am unable to recall), that if our overdraft ever exceeded the combined value of our cars and our minimal office furniture (all of which we actually owned), we would close down our business and get a job.

Luckily, this was never necessary although, I must say that, over the next few years, as we expanded, our cash liquidity position did become a bit of a problem on several occasions – but, thankfully, we had a reasonably sympathetic bank, if there actually is one.

### *A Good Decision*

As is evidenced by the progress and success of the firm over the following years our decision was proven to be a good one.

Our first employee was a draftsman, Sid Weston – the same guy who worked for Wally Tauss. Following Sid was our new typist/receptionist, Annette Watts, a beautiful and very capable young lady – and so on. It wasn't long before we needed to move premises to acquire more office space which, of course, we did as required.

Wood looked after the structural/civil sections and I the mechanical section which, within several years, expanded into a mechanical/electrical section. Technically, unless there was a serious problem, our paths rarely crossed – which was probably a good thing. We, sort of independently, looked after our own sections. This, I believe is probably one of the main reasons for the partnership surviving.

Initially, we sort of shared the administration. Whilst I hate to say this, I was and probably still am the more organised of the two of us and there's no doubt that my memory was considerably better than Wood's – although, at this stage of our lives, it could be said that our memories have roughly balanced out. However, Wood turned out to be the better administrator – more in tune with the times and the trends. So, frequently, I just listened to what he had to say and agreed, partly to keep the peace (nb: although this is not generally recognised, I've always been like that.) Usually what he had suggested worked anyway.

### *Families*

During our second year of operation (in 1962) I married a lovely “youngish” widow with three kids, Berwyn Milner nee Allen) by name – actually she is only three weeks younger than me, both 27 at the time.

Berwyn's first husband, Dig Milner, had been killed in a plane accident at Cervantes when the small plane he was in, taking photos of a shipwreck for WA Newspapers, hit the ocean with a wing tip and flipped. Berwyn and I had known each other for a number of years because Dig and I had been very good friends at school. In actual

fact, when I was in England, I was quite delighted to be asked to be a Godfather by proxy to Kerry, their middle child, when she was christened in Perth. Berwyn and I later had two more children. So we ended up with five kids – Greg, Kerry and Peter Milner and then Russell and Brendon Grieve.

With roughly similar timing, Wood ended-up with four boys, Michael, Ian, Simon and James. It is interesting that none of our children wanted to become engineers and follow on in the firm in our footsteps.

When Wood & Grieve started, it was a 50/50 partnership. As we progressed, we brought in Associates, who shared in some of the profits – Richard Goodbody, who we still see socially from time to time, was one of these to be remembered. Following that, we brought in Tony Nathan, John Tomlinson and Nick Steens all as minor partners. This occurred, I believe in 1976. The next year, 1977, unless I have my facts wrong, Wood & Grieve became a Unit Trust, in which the top staff were permitted to purchase Units.

### *Sharing the Wealth*

Sharing the wealth amongst the best staff in this manner and making them feel more “a part of the firm” is probably one of the

main reasons why the firm has been – and in fact, still is – so successful. This idea was, again from memory, largely initiated by Wood. Another two obviously good reasons why Wood & Grieve were/are successful are A they do an extremely good job and B the staff are friendly and easy to get along with. By the way, I withdrew from the firm in July 1982 – maybe this also helped with the firm's success. Coincidentally, there was a recession in 1982. I wonder if the above last-mentioned two incidents were connected?

More recently, in fact in 2009, Wood & Grieve became an unlisted Public Company which, for various reasons, was considered by the management to be more suitable than a Unit Trust.

Wood & Grieve commenced with just the two of us (by the way, that's a good name for a song) in one office in West Perth. Over the years, whilst the number of staff has fluctuated considerably depending on the work situation at the time, currently, in 2011 the firm employs in excess of 300 people, with offices in Perth (head office), Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Busselton, Albany and Shenzhen, China.

### *Retirement*

From the beginning of time, I always had in mind that I would like to retire no later than the age of 40. This was probably an admirable idea – at least for me because, I have to admit that “family, friends, fun and sport” were higher on my list of priorities than work. However, that didn't happen because, when I reached 40 in 1974, I found that the pre-planning required to achieve retirement at that early age had been virtually non-existent. My financial position was totally inadequate to support my wife and five kids. So I hung about until 1982.

Luckily, since then, 95% of my private investments have turned out well – more than adequate to support us in the manner to which we have now become accustomed.

Wood remained there as Managing Director until 1992. Again, strangely enough, there was another recession in WA at that time and, again, I wonder whether there was any connection?

### *I am Proud*

In retrospect, I am extremely pleased and proud to:

- a) have started Wood & Grieve with Wood in 1961
- b) have been closely associated with and partly responsible for the great success of the firm over the years
- c) know that the firm is still in existence, is still extremely successful and still retains the original, well-known name of Wood & Grieve.

My thanks go out particularly to Tony Wood for his very large contribution and to the Managing Directors who followed him, namely, Bob Mercer and Mike Best – not forgetting Wood & Grieve's Chairman, Ross Kelly. Also thanks to all of the staff who helped in some way to make the firm the success it has been and, in fact, still is.

*Kip Grieve – March 2011*



# history timeline

<b>13 March 1961</b>	Wood and Grieve Engineers commences trading.	<b>1992</b>	Tony Wood retires and Bob Mercer takes over as managing director.
<b>1969</b>	Tony Nathan joins and the company establishes an electrical services section. Theo Newhouse joins and becomes involved in computerising the job costing system.	<b>1996</b>	Busselton offices opens with Anthony McGrath as leader.
<b>1970</b>	69 staff.	<b>2000</b>	91 staff.
<b>1970's</b>	Kip and Tony clearly establish the philosophy of Wood and Grieve. 'People are the key to a successful business'. Wood and Grieve is one of the first private companies in WA to introduce computers into their business practices.	<b>2001</b>	Melbourne offices opens with David Simpson as leader.
<b>1973</b>	The civil section commences with John Tomlinson as manager.	<b>2003</b>	Bob Mercer retires and Mike Best takes over as managing director.
<b>1980</b>	53 staff.	<b>2003</b>	Sydney office re-opens with Athol Malone as leader.
<b>1980's</b>	Total Quality Management introduced.	<b>2005</b>	Brisbane office opens with Johan Sadie as leader.
<b>1982</b>	Kip Grieve retires.	<b>2006</b>	Wood and Grieve wins the prestigious Business Review Weekly Client Choice Award for Exceptional Service.
<b>1988</b>	Wood and Grieve expands eastwards and opens a branch in Sydney with Shane McLinden as leader.	<b>2008</b>	Wood and Grieve acquires Swaan Consulting in Brisbane and opens its first international office Shenzhen, China.
<b>1989</b>	Albany office opens with John Tomlinson as leader.	<b>2010</b>	337 staff.
<b>1990</b>	52 staff.	<b>13 March 2011</b>	Wood and Grieve celebrates 50 years of exceptional service and excellence in engineering.
<b>1992</b>	Wood and Grieve becomes the first consulting engineering firm in WA and only the second in Australia to achieve accreditation to international quality standard AS3901.		





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