

Acceptance Speech by Sir John Pidgeon

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to say how delighted I am to be the Inducted into the Property Council Hall of Fame, and how proud and honoured I am to receive this acknowledgement from the industry.

However, in accepting this award I would like to acknowledge the many people who have helped me over the years.

First is my sister, Valmai who has been with me from the start approximately 65 years ago. Since those early days, we have seen many changes but have managed to survive, so far. Our working relationship has always been close but like all siblings there were arguments along the way. Fortunately we were able to either find a solution or agree to disagree.

I have also been blessed with excellent staff who have contributed so much by their professionalism, their competence and their dedication. Many staff members were with us for over 20 years. Some started and finished their working lives with F A Pidgeon & Son.

Throughout my life I have been fortunate to have the support and encouragement of my family, particularly Sylvia and our five children and later Pamela. I greatly appreciate their unselfish tolerance and understanding.

I guess you could say I was born into the industry. One of my earliest recollections of working with my father was when I was about 3. My father had given me a small hammer and asked me to collect all the bent nails around the site and straighten them. This was his way of keeping me occupied and out of the way.

After a short service in the army, I commenced work in my Father's building business in 1946, as a Post War Reconstruction Trainee Carpenter. This was a scheme that enabled ex-servicemen, who had missed the opportunity for apprenticeships to learn a trade. At the time this was a very successful arrangement.

Our early years were spent building houses, some on contract and some 'on spec' as it was called. You could say this was the genesis of our property development and investment business.

As time went by the buildings became larger and more complicated. Many of these were multi story office complexes. We used to say we have covered practically everything from maternity hospitals to funeral parlours, and everything in between required for the average life span.

One of our goals was to finish projects on time and on budget, however, when we completed a service station in just 19 days, the Client was delighted as this enabled them to start trading just before the Christmas holiday period. I think the approval process alone would take a lot more than 19 days these days.

I can recall many events and situations that occurred over the years, however I would like to share one story that illustrates how life was much more straight forward and business more personal in days gone by.

We were negotiating to buy a large site on the river in Brisbane and after agreeing a price, I shook hands with the vendor and we both recognised this as sealing the deal. A few days later a competitor approached the Vendor and offered a much higher price than we had agreed. The vendor declined the offer and advised a deal had been made on a handshake and that even though no contracts had been signed at that stage, he would honour the original agreement. That was the way we negotiated quite a few large projects back then. I suspect that is not the norm these days.

Many people have asked me to nominate my favourite project. However out of the many hundreds of projects we have completed over the past 86 years, I have never been able single out any one in particular. My response has always been “the next one”!

May I congratulate the Property Council for their initiative in creating the Hall of Fame and for the important role they take in promoting the Australian Property Industry.

Thank you again for including me in this illustrious group of Australian property icons. I am humbled to be invited to join them.