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WORLD'S FAIR SYMBOL

The symbol of the Expo '74 World's Fair is one of the most intriguing geometric figures ever discovered -- a mathematical paradox you can hold in your hand.

It is a ribbon with only one side.

Impossible?

No. The figure is a Mobius strip, named for its discoverer, August Ferdinand Mobius, a 19th Century German mathematician and theoretical astronomer. Mobius was a pioneer of the arcane science of topology, a branch of mathematics which deals with figures whose surface characteristics remain the same while their shapes change.

The Mobius strip was picked as the symbol for Expo '74, whose theme is "Celebrating Tomorrow's Fresh, New Environment," because it illustrates the unity of man and his natural surroundings, earth, sky and water. These represent a continuum, just as the Mobius strip does.

Anyone can make a Mobius strip in a few seconds. Take a ribbon of paper and form a loop. Now flip either end over and glue the loop closed. You now have a Mobius strip, and it has only one side.

To prove it, run the ribbon under a pen or pencil point, making a continuous line. The line will soon meet itself, just as man inevitably meets himself in the consequences of his actions in the natural environment of which he is an inseparable part.

That is what the Expo '74 World's Fair, May 4 to November 3, is all about.

