



News Release

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RELEASE ANY TIME

Ford Motor Company has continued a long-time tradition in erecting a rotunda-type building for its exhibit at San Antonio's HemisFair'68.

Visitors to worlds fairs and major expositions since 1934 have come to associate distinctive rotundas with Ford. At HemisFair'68, visitors see the company's newest idea in rotundas -- a cylindrical steel building, set off-center inside a circular floating canopy. It is designed especially to showcase Ford's unusual motion-picture-in-the-round. Mounted to the inside wall of the building is a huge cylindrical motion picture screen that completely surrounds the audience.

Ford's original rotunda dominated the Ford Pavilion at Chicago's Century of Progress Fair in 1934. When that fair closed, it was disassembled and rebuilt in Dearborn, Mich. It became one of the country's top tourist attractions, housing Ford's seasonal exhibits and serving as a hospitality center for more than 18,000,000 persons who came to tour the famous Ford Rouge manufacturing area. It was destroyed by fire on November 9, 1962.

In its original setting on the shore of Lake Michigan, the first rotunda was the largest exhibit building at the 1934 fair. It housed the Drama of Transportation, depicting the development of passenger vehicles from the early chariots of Egyptian kings and the horse-drawn vehicles of later centuries, to the first automobiles of the nineties and, finally, the "modern" autos of that day.

In the spring of 1935, Balboa Park, overlooking San Diego harbor, was the scene of the California Pacific International Exposition. Again, a Ford rotunda was a familiar sight to millions of fair-goers. When that exposition closed in November, 1935, the Ford Rotunda was made a permanent monument to "the part Ford has played in the upbuilding of the Pacific Coast." It remains so today, rising high over San Diego and serving as a landmark for air traffic in the area.

The year 1939 was an auspicious one for fairs and expositions. In February, the Golden Gate International Exposition opened to the public on 400 acres of dredged land known as Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. Just two months later, the memorable New York World's Fair opened on more than five square miles of reclaimed land on Long Island's Flushing Meadows.

The Ford Pavilion on Treasure Island was the largest commercial exhibit in the exposition, and this time the rotunda trademark was in the form of a horseshoe-shaped entrance hall to the pavilion. The theme of the over-all Ford exhibit was a tribute to America's 11 western states which contributed raw materials to the manufacture of Ford products.

Within the shadows of the famed Trylon and Perisphere, a stately, glass-enclosed rotunda entrance hall served as the entry area to the Ford Pavilion at the 1939 fair in Flushing Meadows.

Carrying out the fair's theme, The World of Tomorrow, the highlight of Ford's Pavilion was an imaginative entertainment and educational feature, "The Road of Tomorrow." This was an elevated dream road that promised a solution to traffic congestion by separating vehicular and pedestrian traffic. An integral part of the pavilion, "The Road" was more than a half-mile long and rose by a spiral ramp to a height of 33 feet. Visitors were driven over this dream road in current-model Ford cars.

In 1962, when the Century 21 Exposition in Seattle welcomed its first visitors, a circular structure again occupied a prominent place in the scheme of the Ford Pavilion. It was a unique geodesic dome which housed the pavilion's show and entertainment features. Trimmed in gold and aluminum, the large circular dome was three stories high and more than 100 feet in diameter.

Once inside the dome, visitors took part in "An Adventure in Outer Space," a 15-minute simulated space journey previewing life in the Twenty-First Century. Comfortably seated in a 100-passenger "spacecraft" and experiencing the actual sights and sounds of space travel, visitors "jourined" across the heavens hundreds of miles above the earth for an astronaut's view of the earth, moon, Saturn, Mars, galaxies and man-made orbiting satellites. A large viewing hatch permitted a panorama of outer space as the ship's captain briefed passengers on the wonders.

At the 1964-65 New York World's Fair, Ford again used a rotunda-type structure to house its "Magic Skyway." The skyway, designed by the late Walt Disney, transported visitors through "time tunnels," creating the illusion of breaking through time barriers for a journey from the dawn of history into the world of tomorrow. Visitors traveled the skyway in Ford-built convertibles.

In the tradition of its predecessor rotundas, Ford's HemisFair'68 at San Antonio extends a cordial welcome to the millions of visitors who come to the fair.

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