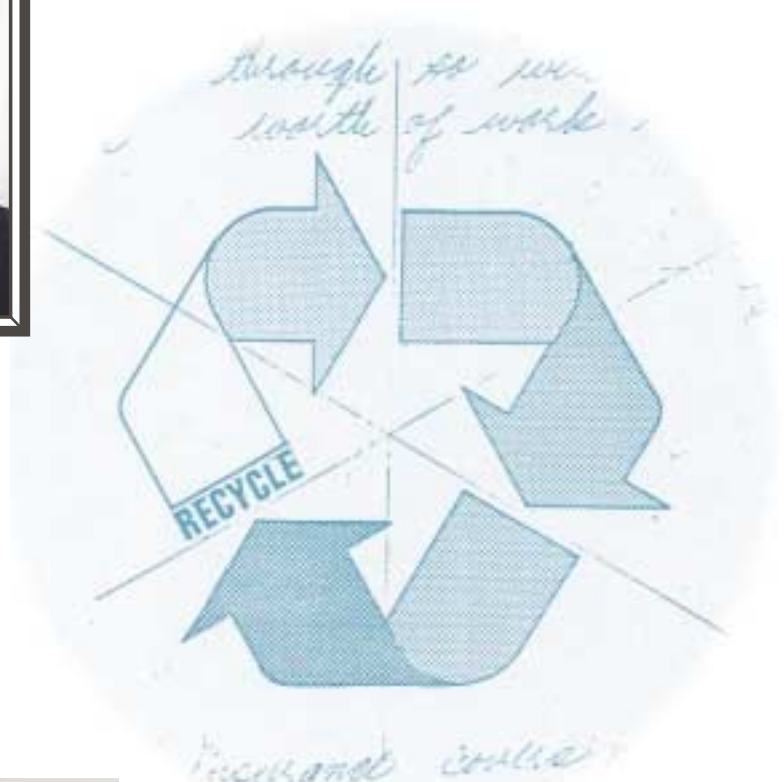


Gary Anderson has been found!



by Penny Jones and Jerry Powell

We tell the story of Gary Anderson, whose 1970 brainchild is recognized by nearly everyone on the planet.



An early design of the recycling symbol, sketched on a letter to Gary's mother.

The thousands involved in recycling — businesses, governmental agencies, environmental groups and others — owe much gratitude to a 51-year-old Baltimore resident. As a 23-year-old college student, he won a contest sponsored by a recycled product maker, and, by doing so, graphically helped push recycling forward. With this article, written by two of the many recycling professionals who have hunted for him in the past years, we reintroduce Gary Anderson to the recycling world.

Environmentalism's heyday

In 1969 and early 1970, national attention toward environmental issues reached a crescendo, culminating in the first Earth Day.

In response, then Chicago-based Container Corporation of America, a large producer of recycled paperboard which is now part of Stone-Smurfit Corp. (St. Louis), sponsored a contest for art and design students at high schools and colleges across the country. The CCA effort was headed by Bill Lloyd, the manager of design in the company's public relations department. CCA asked students, "for the love of the earth," to present designs that symbolize the recycling process. The three prizes were tuition at colleges chosen by the students.

CCA chose to have students submit the

design, which would appear on the company's recycled paperboard products, because, "as inheritors of the earth, they should have their say." CCA at the time was the nation's largest paper recycler, consuming 750,000 tons per year of secondary fiber.

The more than 500 submittals that were received were evaluated by a distinguished panel of designers at the 1970 International Design Conference in Aspen, Colorado. In September 1970, CCA awarded the top prize of \$2,500 to a senior at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles — Gary Anderson — who used the funds to contin-

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Evolution of the symbol



100% recycled fiber



XX% recycled fiber
(for less than 100%)



Recyclable

Historically, three variations on Anderson's original design were promoted by the American Paper Institute to convey different meanings. Today, the symbols often are used interchangeably, as their use is not regulated.

ue his education in Sweden. The symbol was a three-chasing-arrows Mobius loop, with the arrows twisting and turning among themselves. (August Ferdinand Mobius, the nineteenth century mathematician, discovered that a strip of paper twisted once over and joined at the tips formed a continuous, single-edged, one-sided surface.) Because of the symbol's simplicity and clarity, it became widely used worldwide, and now is as common as the Nike "swoosh" and the Coca-Cola lettering.

Into the public domain

At the same time, in the fall of 1970, CCA was working with other paper and paperboard producers to assess how their industry should best address the rising call for fiber recycling. Because CCA now had a new symbol, the company chose to license Gary Anderson's design, refined and adapted for print-use by Bill Lloyd, to trade associations for a nominal fee. In September 1970, the symbol was accepted by the three principal paper industry groups, the Fibre Box Association, the Paperboard Packaging Council and the American Paper Institute. CCA applied to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for registration of the symbol as a trademark. But registration for the symbol — now becoming popular due to CCA's promotion of it — was challenged. The corporation dropped its application rather than fight for the trademark, and the Anderson design fell into the public domain.

Several years later, CCA designed two revisions of the three-arrow recycling logo.

The version with the arrows within a circle connoted recycled content (white arrows in a black circle meant 100 percent recycled content; black arrows in a white circle meant recycled content of a stated percentage). The second version had the recycling symbol as an outline, not enclosed in a circle. This connoted that an item was recyclable.

Personal growth followed

Designing the ubiquitous recycling logo is only one of Anderson's many accomplishments, as shown by his varied career since graduating from USC in 1971 with a Master's Degree in Urban Design.

Gary presently is a senior associate and chief planner at STV Inc. (Baltimore), an engineering, architectural and planning firm. Previously, he was a senior planner with county government and a university medical center; headed the planning department of a Saudi Arabian university; and was a research fellow at Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University, from which he received his Ph.D. in geography and environmental engineering in 1985.

Gary remains environmentally concerned. For example, he is focusing on the issue of managed urban growth, and sits on the board of directors of 1,000 Friends of Maryland, a controlled-growth activist group.

His ideas are clear

Anderson obviously has carefully considered the effect of his work nearly three decades ago. In recent conversations and correspondence with Penny Jones, he offered many thoughtful remarks.

On the logo's design: "The figure was designed as a Mobius strip to symbolize continuity within a finite entity. I used the [logo's] arrows to give directionality to the symbol. I envisioned it with the small edge or the point of the triangle at the bottom. I wanted to suggest both the dynamic (things are changing) and the static (it's a static equilibrium, a permanent kind of thing). The arrows, as broad as they are, draw back to the static side."

On the design's variants. "Originally, when I saw variations on it, that bothered me. I had submitted three designs which were variations on a theme, and the judges chose the plainest of the three. The design as modified by CCA is more static than the way I originally showed it. The proportions and the angles and the arcs are the same as in my original design, but Container made the linework sharper so that it would reproduce better. They also rotated it by about 60 degrees. What's important to me now is that the symbol is general enough that it has been capable of being modified. The more variations made on it, the better it is."

On the source of such symbols: "Karl Jung [says that a] symbol really is a reflection of a primeval *form* that's in our collective consciousness."

On his feelings about his product's universal, worldwide use: "One thing is certain: It seems to belong to *everybody* — and that is fine with me. I entered the contest with the understanding that the winning entry would belong in the public domain. I've gotten used to seeing it. At first I felt very gratified and, I guess, proud and I was happy that I was able to come up with something which people could latch on to — happy, pleased, gratified to make a contribution — that's pretty neat." RR

Resource Recycling extends many thanks to Penny Jones, whose seven-year search for Gary Anderson made this article possible.

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