



KaCSFFS

KaCSFFS: Lost Imagery & Hidden Mysteries by Ken Keller

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The first official KaCSFFS emblem, which was adopted by the very first KaCSFFS Advisory Board, was often referred to in the club's early years as "the KaCSFFS bulls-eye." Along with a large, sectional black and white banner, it debuted at the third KaCSFFS meeting on August 21, 1971, at the main branch of the Kansas City Public Library. This emblem, (reproduced above) was used on the club's early letterhead and mailing envelopes, displayed on a wall with the KaCSFFS banner at all club meetings and early Honors Banquet sites, and used in our early con program books. Oddly, it never appeared in *X-Ray Delta One*, the club's first newsletter, due to constant space limitations, no matter how often I tried to squeeze it in while doing the camera-ready paste-ups. As KaCSFFS slowly established itself, and Advisory Board administrations changed during the club's first decade, a more casual, less structured nature to club meetings emerged as the norm, and this official emblem faded away, eventually being replaced with the more prosaic "Kassie the KaCSFFS Cow" symbol. But the story behind the club's first emblem, and what symbology was built into it, was never recorded, its origin and purpose remaining a total mystery.

Back in early in 1971, I began to consider a logo of some sort for KaCSFFS. All established fan groups in fandom had adopted one by that point, so it seemed like a natural thing for us to have one, too. At the time, there were two common but distinct types in use: humorous and cartoony (a cute SF or Fantasy creature or figure, done very much in the style and format of military aircraft nose-art) or an old-fashioned medieval style coat-of-arms (used by the long-established First Fandom, LASFS, and NESFA to name several). Neither style appealed to me at the time, largely because these approaches had been done to death. I wanted something a little more innovative for the new KaCSFFS. Fortunately the Advisory Board members agreed with me. While researching the subject, I noticed that the simple but striking graphic corporate-style logos had never been adopted by the older SF clubs. Only the young Minnesota Science Fiction Society, MINN-STF, had what was easily identifiable as a corporate-style logo. Perhaps organized fandom considered these just too mundane or unfannish, but this type of emblem held great appeal for me: It spoke of reliability, longevity, and stability--even a certain level of professionalism. In other words, just the thing for an upstart KC fan group! At least these were ideals that I hoped the fledgling KaCSFFS would eventually grow into, if it survived, after it had established a regional convention, incorporated itself, and begun to function along traditional fannish lines.

As I studied them, I began to wonder if these sleek corporate icons had any meanings attached to them. Were they all just cold, empty symbols designed to momentarily distract and intrigue the eye? Well, a KaCSFFS emblem would certainly *not* be this soulless type--just the opposite in fact. Ours would be crammed full of symbolic import and cryptic hidden meanings, all for the future fannish ages to come! Or so I hoped, a bit naively, as I began to pursue that lofty goal. Surprisingly, it proved much easier to achieve, thanks to a man who wasn't even a KaCSFFS member.

That first official club emblem was the product of a collaboration, of sorts, between myself and Dave Skrzlowski, a friend and Hallmark designer that I worked with me in the company's Store Display department. After assembling my written notes and a bunch of rough sketches, I turned over the whole batch to Dave, hoping that he could translate it all into something remotely like what I had in mind. He read my notes, looked at the roughs, asked a couple of questions, and flashed his always confident grin when I asked if he could make any sense of it. In a relatively short time, much to my surprise, had the emblem finished. When he first showed it to me, painted in-scale to match the large KaCSFFS sectional banner I had just completed, I was stunned by the sheer simplicity of his elegant super-graphic design. *It was all there!* He had managed to incorporate every single symbolic element that I requested, without them being easily recognized. Perfect!

Reaction to the new emblem at the third KaCSFFS meeting was mostly ambivalent, even after I announced during my chairman's report that its design contained hidden meanings. Only a few were intrigued by the club's new emblem. I was a bit disappointed, of course, but in time it was finally accepted as part of the fabric of the early Kansas City Science Fiction & Fantasy Society, eventually fading away over time. In the mid-90s, I resurrected it as the logo for the club's new publishing imprint, KaCSFFS Press--but its Mysteries remained unrevealed.

Until now.

First, the outer circle of the design represents international SF fandom as a whole, of which KaCSFFS would always be a part as long as it existed. The inner circle, at its center, the heart of the design, represents the club as it sits at the near geographic center of the country, and as a result, the geographic heart of U.S. fandom.

Second, both circles form a rising sun--a summer sun--just as it clears the morning horizon line, formed by the club's initials. (Note the shimmering effect of the graduated parallel lines.) It announces the ascendancy of a new summer day, the day of July 3, 1971, the day that the Kansas City Science Fiction & Fantasy Society became a reality, marking our ascendancy into the science fiction and fantasy community.

Encrypted within the design of the KaCSFFS emblem is that all-important date of July 3, 1971. Dave Skrzelowski steadfastly refused to give me the slightest clue on how to decode it, just flashing me that grin of his, this time with a devilish glint in his eye. But he assured me it was there. (No, it's not a barcode, which didn't exist then!) I still believe him after all this time. As the emblem's creator, it was the one thing he put there strictly for himself, to know and enjoy. I understood the impulse completely, having also done that myself (see below). Despite many attempts, some tantalizing close, to this very day, having long since lost contact with Dave, no fannish Rosetta Stone has surfaced to give me a solid clue on how to decipher it.

On the whole, not too shabby for a simple SF club emblem.

But there is still one final hidden meaning, a third and more complex Mystery to be revealed that was deliberately buried by me in the logo just for fun, as a personal touchstone and homage to an important early science fictional influence. It's now time to reveal all. Here are the background details to speed you toward the denouement:

Placed together with the club's original newsletter *X-Ray Delta One* and the club's original publishing imprint, Japetus Publications, the emblem forms a symbolic trinity, specifically a 2001 Trinity. 2001: A Space Odyssey, both film and novel, is invested with many Trinities, many Mysteries, and much High Symbolism. *X-Ray Delta One* is the name, in international signal code, of the experimental Discovery One (XD-1) spacecraft, used by Mission Control to hail the ship's crew in both the film and novel. Japetus is the archaic name for a moon of Saturn (both used but only in the novel, instead of film's Jupiter) that the mysterious and omnipresent monolith, in a stationary orbit, can be seen against as the Discovery enters Saturn space. In Clarke's novel it looks not unlike an unblinking eye to astronaut Bowman. If by now you've begun to see a human eye represented in the emblem, you are correct. It is the iris and pupil, in extreme cinematic close-up, (as seen in the final portion of the film) of astronaut David Bowman as he plunges headlong through the corridors of inter-dimensional time and space.

The third and final Mystery contained in the KaCSFFS emblem is now revealed--itself forming yet another symbolic trinity--for all to observe. And one more small piece of KC fannish history is now preserved, my narrative finally concluded after more than 25 years.

But wait! Crack KaCSFFSologists, under the direction of David Sooby, Lit. Fan. D, may have finally deciphered the club's founding date, long buried by Dave Skrzelowski in its design. The final mystery of the KaCSFFS emblem may soon be revealed. What strange portal will be unlocked when that final key is turned? Stay tuned.