

SOS Signal

Stamps on Stamps Collectors Club

IDENTIFYING UNIDENTIFIABLE STAMPS: COSTA RICA C502 By Lou Guadagno



Bosnia Sc #99, 82



Sc #C502, issued 9/14/70



Sc #C28, issued 2/10/37

Being a stamp on stamp (SOS) junkie is hard, as there can never be enough issues to satisfy the craving for new stamps to acquire and peruse. Then too, there are issues like Costa Rica Sc #C502. When this came out in 1970, I had been a stamp on stamp collector for only a few years, and was still making my own checklists and trying to identify the reproduced stamps. At first glance, it was a disappointment, as there was only one prominent stamp on stamp with a group of stamp-like blobs in the background, and I wished that the designer had made them larger real stamps.

On taking a second look, three of the 14 were truly just blank shapes, but I realized that the others were probably Costa Rican stamps, but so tiny and simplified as to be unidentifiable. Even under a low power magnifier the lithograph printing process turned them into masses of shaded dots. There were two or three that bore resemblance to specific issues, but I had not yet developed my eye for identifying such items and the Scott catalog did not show enough designs to aid me. Later, when I discovered and joined the Stamps on Stamps Centenary Unit, I saw that even their masters of identification only listed Sc #124, the

12c Columbus issue of 1923, so sadly I set the stamp into my collection as a one reproduced stamp design.

Then, in the early 1980's I decided to acquire a set of Michel catalogs because my lists were incomplete and they included so many more issues than Scott and also illustrated more than one design in sets of stamps. One night, flipping thru the volume for North and Central America, I double checked the known SOS issues for Costa Rica and then decided to take another crack at the background of #C502. I started on the stamps I had tentatively identi-

fied years before—the diamond shaped and rectangular stamps just to the left of the magnifying glass. There was only one diamond shaped issue that matched, the 1937 Airplane over Poas Volcano design—and if you let your eyes go out of focus, you could see that it fit. By this time I had resolved that I would not use Scott Type numbers for a stamp that could not be specifically identified; instead I use the lowest value in the set in this case, the 1c Sc #C28. The other stamp had what appeared to be a large building as the central motif and a round value tablet—here there was only one

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IDENTIFYING UNIDENTIFIABLE STAMPS: COSTA RICA C502 By Lou Guadagno

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“Easier said than done! It took months to come up with seven more identifications.”



Sc #124, issued 10/2/23



Sc #RA32, issued 3/15/67



Sc #C473, issued 12/12/67

Jose G.P.O. postal tax stamp, Sc #RA32.

From there I jumped to the two stamps just above the magnifier which appeared to have definite areas that might be identifiable and they did. The left-most stamp had a broad dark panel to the left and two small “some things” in the right. A very short search thru Michel showed there was again only one design like that, the 1966 45c LASCA 20th Anniversary stamp, Sc #C473. The stamp next to it had side panels, an arch at the top and a central area with light and dark sections that also turned out to be a specific design, the 1937 2c Airplane over Puntarenas stamp, Sc #C31.

After these, the identifications were not as easy, but I had decided that I would not give up trying to decipher the remaining stamps. I went to another trick I had learned through the years. I set the stamp aside and just concentrated on studying the illustrations in the catalog, not looking for a particular design aspect but getting an overall idea of the types of designs there were. One thing struck me right away; there were a lot of Costa Rican stamps, but very few repetitive designs, even in multiple stamp sets and that would make the job easier. Once I had narrowed down what I felt I was seeing in the reproductions, I was sure I could find the actual stamps.

Easier said than done! It took months to come up with seven more identifications. I would spend a night or two on the issue and then set it aside for weeks if nothing was working out. Most of the remaining stamps had very faint de-

sign areas, but by finally ruling out all the other stamps they couldn't be, I found my mystery stamps.

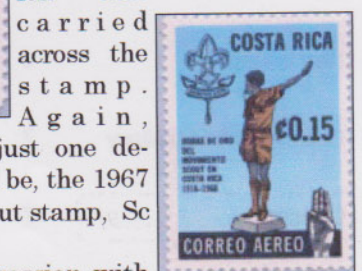
First to be found was the top left stamp which had a dark top panel and a dark circle at the bottom right. Again there was only one design with just those areas the 1967 50c Cachi Dam stamp, Sc #C442. Next, was the stamp held in the tongs that had a dark right hand panel and a possible dark circle at the bottom left. This was from the same set, the 5c Power Lines stamp, Sc #C437. Strangely, the follow up identification was for one of what I originally thought just a blob, the second from the left stamp in the top row. Taking yet another long look, I now could make out just the suggestion of a bottom panel and of a shape at the top left that

carried across the stamp. Again, there was just one design it could be, the 1967 15c Boy Scout stamp, Sc #C475.

My next session with Sc #C502 got me three more identifications, but I had to resort to a



Sc #C442 above, #C437 below, issued 4/24/67.



Sc #C475, issued 3/15/67



The “Unidentifiable” Stamps



Sc #C31, issued 12/15/37

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IDENTIFYING UNIDENTIFIABLE STAMPS: COSTA RICA C502

By Lou Guadagno

"I have to confess my next to last identification took me another year or so to make. The triangular stamp next to the magnifier should have been easy to find, given the few such shaped issues there are from Costa Rica, but I could not reconcile the central shape to any stamp."

little technical help to confirm them to my satisfaction. I mentioned it did not help to magnify the stamp, but I got the idea to reduce the catalog pages over and over in a photocopier until the illustrations were as tiny and as simplified as the stamps.

The stamp in the second row that had a light oval and two odd shapes turned out to be the 1968 30C Olympic Runner stamp, Sc #C481. The stamp to the left of #C28 that had the same light oval and what looked like half a crucifix came from the same set, the 75c Olympic Weightlifter stamp, Sc #C485. The bottom most stamp with the same light oval and five dark spots was also from that set, the 40c Olympic Woman Runner stamp, Sc #C482.

I have to confess my next to last identification took me another year or so to make. The triangular stamp next to the magnifier should have been easy to find, given the few such shaped issues there are from Costa Rica, but I could not reconcile the central shape to any stamp. There were eight animal designs issued in early 1963 and an additional four different revalued animal designs were issued later that same year; most I ruled out as either the frames or the animal did not fit the shapes in the stamp. Finally, I narrowed it down to two stamps, but still wasn't satisfied until I got the idea to rotate the stamp. It turned out the stamp was the only one in the design not aligned to the top. Once I caught this, I identified the stamp as the 85c on 4c Greater Anteater stamp, Sc #C370.

This left the one stamp under the handle of the tongs and it was difficult to tell, where the tongs end and the

stamp's center design began; also, the frames of the stamp did not match any in the catalog. All the tricks above narrowed down the search, but even the best choice did not quite "do it" for me. I sent a first draft of this article to Bill Critzer, who collects Costa Rica as well as stamps on stamps, and he suggested

that the 65c First Costa Rican Boy Scout Meeting stamp, Sc #C479 was the most logical possibility. Since this was also my choice (with reservations about

the frames), and since the designer was prone to using stamps from the same sets in his other background stamps, I have added it to the identified group.

While these studies were going on, I was also making an effort to locate the reproduced stamps as I identified them, another not so easy task. Luckily, I live in New York City, and gradually—from stamp show to stamp show—I found the stamps. I have shown a page with #C502 and my identified stamps to several stamp clubs, but to only one SOS collector, so I decided to rectify that with this article.



Left to right; Sc #C481, C482, C485, issued 1/17/68.



Sc #C370, issued 9/14/63



Sc #C479, issued 3/15/68



C502-3 First Day Cover

Special by Design

By Martin Hirschbühl

"The French stamp of 1999 really was a spectacular one. It was both the first SOS with a hologram and the last issue in French francs. But unfortunately, the background looks just like a jig-saw puzzle with a couple of pieces gone."



Beneath all the other SOS-beauties in my magical SOS album, there are some hidden eye (or mind) catchers. Let me introduce you to a few of them.

In the year 2000 Great Britain issued a so-called "Prestige Booklet" with a range of stamps considered to be "Special by Design". One of them repeats the 1990's double portrait of Queens Elizabeth and Victoria, still in symbolic black, with the meaningful value of "1st", the premium-letter rate (then 26p). Knowing our British friends, I guess this was meant as a reference to the Penny Black, the first (or 1st) stamp ever. Disregarding the crazy security-perforation, this detail made it really a special design to me.

The Isle of Man, as a part of Britain, told us the story of the Penny Black before; in a sheetlet (top right) they showed the different stages from William Wyon's medal to essay, finally leading to the first pair of stamps. A philatelic history in brief! Funny enough, one penny is the world's number one, while two pence is the world's number two.

In the meantime, the stamps of several other countries reached the age of 150 years. Most of them commemorated this event in the traditional SOS-way. Others tried to do it more unusually. The French stamp of 1999 really was a spectacular one. It was both the first SOS with a hologram and the last issue in French francs. But unfortunately, the background looks just like a jig-saw puzzle with a couple of pieces gone. Or is it "Ceres after attack"? Beside all superlatives, the damage done nearly breaks my philatelic heart!

But what about my country's sheetlet? Does it show Switzerland's first federal stamp, the "Rayon"? It could also be scrambled eggs with ketchup or something else? Maybe an unfinished sketchbook for kids, that has to be completed by the numbers? Questions over



questions! Well, if that's the future of SOS-design, I'd rather stay old-fashioned!

That's why I prefer to blow out the candles on Queen Isabella's birthday



cake, offered with compliments to all of us on Spain's tasty stamp.

Uruguay, too, has many nice SOS, including some unique ones: in 1966, they printed the famous

"Diligencia" of 1856 on a normal stamp, the first (?) SOS made with an overprint only. The



same year saw the reissue of the Centenary of 1864 "Coat of Arms" sheet (only 1 value shown). Now with the overprint, commemorating the overprinted "Resellados" of 1866, each with the new value (shown here-"20") on the



right place. Normally, I don't collect overprints on SOS, except for these. What a clever way of recycling.

And now, the great wizard is presenting his Uruguay album. The King is applauding and the juvenile court is astounded, all in a philatelic haze. Another unusual, but marvelous idea.



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Special by Design

By Martin Hirschbühl

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Look at the French "Semeuse" of 2003: for a century she's been sowing strong. Back in 1984 she almost had her day, when she walked straight off her own frame. Now she's back again, right on place, but self-sticking.

This isn't the first self-adhesive SOS. In 1969 Sierra Leone issued an SOS set in "free format" size. There was no postal need for such items. It was just another joke from the agency. Besides that, I'm not ashamed to say that I always loved them for their funny mixture of tradition and modernity. Nowadays, our "serious" countries begin to issue more and more such cinderellas, but not yet that advanced. They also had commercials printed on the back. But they didn't seem to work or pay, because most of these stamps remain unpeeled in collectors albums, the ads unseen and unread, covered by the backing paper.....what a pity.

One can sometimes find SOS-like reprints, where only parts, especially the frames, are similar to the original. For example, on a 1959 Bahamas Elizabeth II replaced Victoria, just to show us the continuity of Empire.

On New Zealand's "Universal Postage", the original drawing was replaced by a contemporary photo of the ship. The frame is nearly like the original, also not quite well centered. The reason for this new design is unknown to me, contrary to the Hungarian issue of 1951. Here, it's plain for me to see why former king "Ferencz-Josze" was removed: for the Commies, he truly was a "persona non grata"! They filled the gap with a matching postmark of 1871 and dominated the whole thing with their martial, but short-lived coat of arms.

How will the future of SOS design turn out? Bare-naked, like the Danish one of 1983? In a mirror-image positive, it shows the well-known "cypher plus waveline", Denmark's first steel en-



graved issue of 1933. Or, ultra-traditional like Sweden's



centenary of 1955? They used the original plates of 1855 for the reprint taking old-looking paper and gum, overprinted the obsolete currency, and invented an actualized watermark for this issue only.

Let's hope we will not be tortured with designer's fantasy, like Nigeria 1994, the SOS with the most errors. They affixed an incorrect stamp of 1874 on an air-mail letter, cancelled with a non-existent postmark of Lagos. This one is ready for the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Another strange picture comes from Monaco, or is it from Disneyland? Overblown with details, you can hardly recognize the odd bunch of Monaco #1 in front of a French and a Sardinian pseudo-stamp. This trio was often reproduced on Monaco's SOS, but never that trashy!

If SOS design has to be poppy or spacey, what is better than to send good old George V into an orbit, drawing speed lines around the globe, as on Gibraltar's Europa 1984. Disregarding all surroundings, I like SOS where I can clearly identify the reproduced stamp.

But who, except for you and me is able to decide whether it's good or bad, funny or sad design? Take it as it comes. One highlights the other. They are all needed to complete the picture of our SOS collection. Or, in a few words: I really love them all.....



New Issues by Lou Guadagno (new on list = *)

Date	Country	Values	Stamp Reproduced	Reason for Issue	Scott #
03 05 12	Albania	50, 1000L	Albania Mi #1, others tbi	90th Ann'y, Stamps of Albania	2707-8
03 04 05	Bosnia (Croat)	* 1.80	Bosnia (Croat Adm.) #82	Europa 2003—Poster Art	99
03 08 01	Brazil	2 x 1.30 R	Portugal #1, Brazil #2, others	How to Collect Stamps (s/s-2 v)	2888a-b
03 09 09	Croatia	2.30k	Croatia # tbi	Stamp Day; 50th Ann'y, Postal Museum	533
03 09 09	Croatia	2.30k	Croatia # tbi	As above; imprinted postal card	To come
04 01 20	Czech Rep.	* 6.50k	Czechoslovakia #1703	Traditions of Czech Stamp Production (1v)	To come
04 01 20	Czech Rep.	* 8 x 6.50k	Czechoslovakia #1703	Tradition of Czech Stamp Production (Bklt)	To come
03 07 22	Ecuador	* 4x40c	Ecuador #C1,C4,C5,273,others	Guayaquil and Philately (5v-3 SOS)	1679-80
03 07 22	Ecuador	* \$2.00	GB #60, Ecuador 37 different	Guayaquil and Philately (S/S)	1682
03 10 28	Indonesia	* 1500r	Indonesia # 1031-2, 1246	75th Ann'y Oath of the Youth	To come
03 00 00	(No.) Korea	* 60ch	DPR Korea Mi #2,4, 2003 stamp	Opening Exhibition Hall (1v perf and imperf)	To come
03 12 00	(No.) Korea	* 2 x 110ch	In margins-China PR, many	Birth Centenary, Mao Tse Tung (2 s/s-4 v ea)	To come
03 08 20	New Caledonia	* 2x10x70fr	New Caledonia #77—revised ovpt	Prestige Bklt (20v-10 SOS #913 silver ovpt)	913Ab
03 11 14	Philippines	* 22 \$P	Philippines #1-4, + in margin	Filipinas 2004 Exh. Publicity (s/s-I)	To come
03 12 15	Philippines	* 22 \$P	Philippines #1-4, + in margin	Filipinas 2004 Exh. Publicity (s/s-II)	To come
04 01 15	Philippines	* 22 \$P	Philippines \$1-4, + in margin	Filipinas 2004 Exh. Publicity (s/s-III)	To come
04 01 30	Philippines	* 3 x 22 \$P	Philippines \$1-4, + in margin	Filipinas 2004 Exh. Publicity (3 s/s-IV-V-VI)	To come
04 02 01	Philippines	* 4 x 6 \$P	Philippines #1-4	150th Anny. Stamps (4 v se tenant strip)	To come
04 02 01	Philippines	* 22 \$P	Philippines #1-4, + in margin	150th Anny. Stamps (s/s)	To come
04 02 01	Philippines	* 8 x 6 \$P	Philippines #1-4	150th Anny. Stamps (s/s, 4v perf, 4 v imperf)	To come
03 12 12	Poland	* 1.20-2.60 zt	Sweden(2), France, Vatican City	Polonica Stamp Exhibition (4 v)	To come
03 09 19	Portugal	€ 3.00	Portugal #2	150th Anny. First Stamps of Portugal (s/s)	2576
03 09 23	Portugal	€ 2.50	Portugal #2	F de Borgia Freire, designer, engraver (S/S)	2577
03 09 25	Portugal	€ 0.30 x 4	Portugal #1,	Lubrapex 2003 (s/s-4v)	2578
03 12 12	Portugal	* € 1.00	Portugal #2, partial + in margin	150th Anny. Stamps (s/s)	To come
03 03 18	San Marino	€ 0.77	Spain #649, Sweden 175, others	Veronafil Exh 2003 SOS on tabs, left or right	1561
03 12 01	Suriname	* 2 x 3500 SF	Suriname # 192, Monaco # J50	Provisional Revalues—ovpts on # 928-9	To come



From left: San Marino (tab), Croatia, Suriname, Indonesia, Czech Republic.

Club Notes & Miscellany

By Bill Critzer

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When I became editor in 1997, I thought it might be nice to do for five years, but it has now turned into seven. During the last two years I sold most of my SOS collection and kept only remnants of particular interest. In December, I gave notice to the officers of my resignation as editor, informing them that I would be willing to do this issue and the next, as well as help in whatever way I could in the transition to a new editor.

The new editor is Lou Guadagno. Lou is a long time member of SOSCC and was formerly its editor in the early 1980's. Newer members know him as our New Issues editor. However, beyond that is the fact that Lou is one of the premier SOS collectors in the world and an

authority on SOS. In our 50th year, we are very fortunate to have a person of Lou's stature as our editor and I wish him all the best as he tackles these new duties.

Let me remind all of you that you can help Lou immensely by taking the time to write an article or submit a favorite cover, or send a clipping about an SOS item. SOSCC is a non-profit philatelic organization of people with a mutual interest in SOS stamps. We exist as an organization only because of our active interest in the topic.

It has been a pleasure to be your editor and I want to thank each of you who supported me with articles, illustrations, kind words, and interest.

Estate Remainder Auction

By Alf Jordan

The club has received a fine gift of souvenir covers from past President Wes Shellen who has begun a process of deaccessioning. Wes formed this collection during the sesquicentennial of the Penny Black, and it consists of nicely franked memorial covers issued by local US stamp clubs. While Wes claims it is not complete, it is pretty representative, consisting of some 35 envelopes and 5 cards – originating from Tennessee to Oregon!

The Editor and I have put our heads together and come up with a minimum bid of \$10 for the lot – all proceeds to benefit, naturally, the club. The auction will remain open until the next issue of the *Signal*, in which the lucky winner will be announced.

E-mail your bids to me at the ad-

dress on the web site.* If you don't have e-mail, it's probably time you spent a few bucks and got it – or I guess you could always spend US \$0.37 and post it here with an SOS stamp—rates higher, of course, from overseas.

If the minimum bid is not met, we will either randomly distribute the collection to interested members — or simply just keep it!

S/ Alf Jordan, your devoted Secretary-treasurer and Printer

* Michael Merritt reports that he has updated the web site, so you had better check it out. Michael is also looking for a replacement webmaster. If you have an interest let him know.

SOSCC was founded in 1954. It is a non-profit philatelic organization serving a worldwide membership and is open to persons interested in stamp on stamp designs, stamp anniversaries and related topics. Dues are \$11 per year for members residing in North America and \$14 elsewhere.

Officers serve without compensation and are reimbursed only for expenses incurred on behalf of the club. You are cordially invited to associate with us. Please contact the Secretary Treasurer or use our website for more information and to become a member.

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More New Issues by Lou Guadagno



Clockwise from top left: Portugal, North Korea (1 of 2), Philippines (2 of 7), Poland.