

Dog Breeder Sues 'Rin Tin Tin' Movie Company

Trademark holder hopes to avoid confusion over recent film "Finding Rin Tin Tin."

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To Daphne Hereford, Rin Tin Tin stands for integrity. That's why the Texas dog breeder and owner of several Rin Tin Tin patents is suing the makers of "Finding Rin Tin Tin," a direct-to-DVD film released Sept. 16.

"Rin Tin Tin is important to me and to other people," said the owner of RinTinTin.com and holder of seven Rin Tin Tin federal trademarks, in an interview with the Houston Chronicle.

Hereford's claim to part of Rin Tin Tin's legacy begins with her grandmother, a breeder who bought several puppies from Lee Duncan, the owner of the original Rin Tin Tin.

"The Rin Tin Tin dogs have been a part of my life since I was 7," says Hereford, who breeds Rin Tin Tin descendents and operates a small Rin Tin Tin museum from her Crockett, Texas, home.

Hereford's lawsuit against First Look Studios Inc. says she's concerned about the confusion created by the movie because her dogs don't appear in the film, the story isn't completely accurate, and the dog's behavior is questionable.

Hereford's Houston-based lawyer, Karen Tripp, says the current case is about the dilution of trademarks. "Daphne has a very strong trademark in Rin Tin Tin. Her registrations are incontestable," Tripp says.

There are several possible remedies, Tripp says. "At the very least, there has to be a notice that these are not Rin Tin Tin dogs, but actors. Her dogs are beautiful and well-trained, and she wants it clear in the marketplace."