

MYSTERY SOLVED!

by Denise Flaim
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Who's the dog on the RRCUS logo?

Actually, nobody knew there was a mystery when I received an email several months ago to ask if I as the RRCUS historian had any photographs of Swahili's Jeff Davis, the first American Ridgeback to earn an American championship.

"Sure," I said, "but it might be hard to find a really good one" – Jeff Davis was not the most photogenic Ridgeback.

The photo was needed because the RRCUS board was considering reworking the RRCUS medallion. And since the medallion was based on Jeff Davis, the email explained, the idea was to use him as its basis.

"But the medallion isn't based on Jeff Davis," I emailed back. That much I knew – not unless the medallion was a very liberal depiction of the actual dog, as the two are very dissimilar.

But who was the medallion based on? That required more detective work.

Searching for the earliest iteration of the RRCUS medallion, I started with the club's show catalogs. And there, in faint red ink, on the cover of the club's first match show catalog in 1957, was the familiar offset side profile of a Ridgeback. This etching, however, was far more handsome than the oddly-headed, muttomy-looking creature that currently graces our medallion.

This dog had clean, sleek lines, and his mouth was slightly open.

It was clear that our current medallion was based on this early design – the similarity between the dogs' outlines was just too strong. But over the years, the original



design had been corrupted, its detail lost, its open-mouthed headpiece morphing into a blockhead. And the rear on the earlier medallion was different – better stacked, and stronger looking.

Perhaps the earliest club newsletters would provide a clue. So I began paging through, and then there, right in front of me, was the answer.

It was a show photo of Lamarde Perro Bavenda, a well-known African import from the late 1950s. He was stacked with his mouth slightly open. It was the exact same stance as the current RRCUS medallion. The

artist who had done the earliest rendering probably had been instructed to change the position of the dog's rear so it was more pleasing. Whoever copied the photo for the current medallion just took it straight from the photo.

There, then, was the answer. The dog on our current medallion is a very poorly rendered shadow of one of our earliest, and most exceptional foundation dogs. It makes perfect sense that then-club secretary Margaret Lowthian of Lamarde Perro Kennels would choose what she considered one of the finest most conformation dogs in the country to grace the first-ever medallion. And it makes sense that she, with her eye for a dog, might tweak his stack to show him off to his best advantage.

The next mystery, of course, is what the new RRCUS medallion will look like. My vote, for what it is worth, is to recast the original 1955 medallion, in all its detail and glory, so Ch. Lamarde Perro's Bavenda can retain his place – correctly rendered this time – on the club's most prestigious trophy piece. •

