

Amount of food grain stocks that are consumed by rats in India, which has prompted one state to encourage people to eat the rats.

GATEHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

**ANOTHER LOOK**

**'Who's Frankie?'**

Origin of Superior Provision's icon mascot

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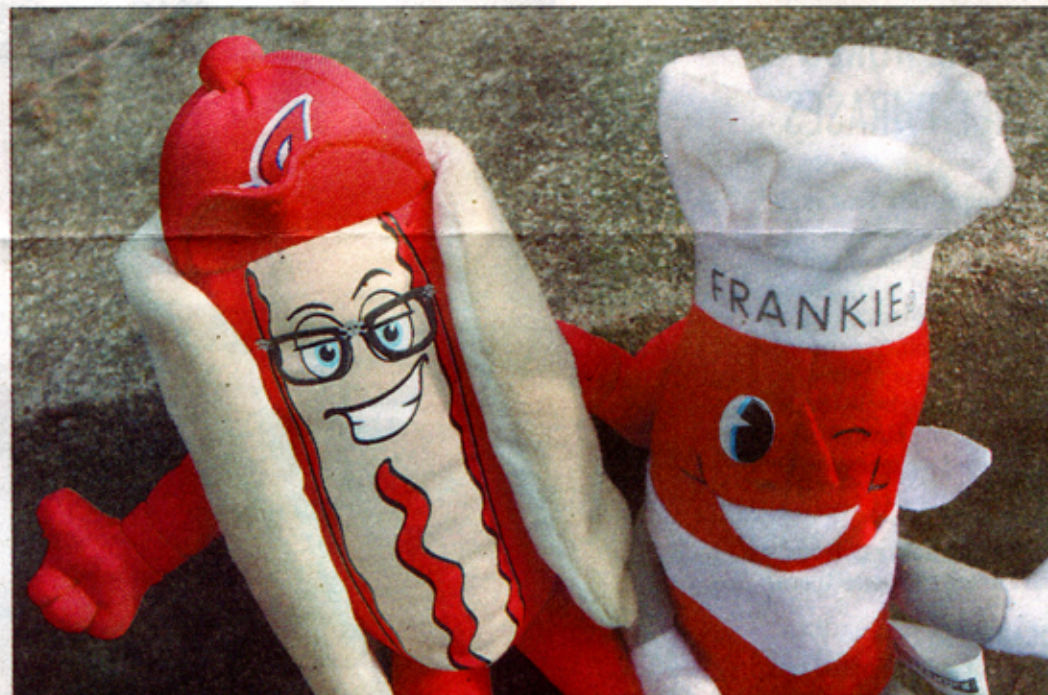
Our Living-section story on Aug. 24 about the origins of the Frankie the Keener Wiener jingle resulted in a letter from Judy Woodring of Lisbon. Her father, Vic Decker, was the father of Frankie.

Decker never went past the fourth grade. But "he had something special," says Judy. "He was always creating."

This led Vic to a radio career. He predated Jim Muzzy as sports announcer at WHBC. He later was station manager at WCMW. Then he started his own Decker Advertising Agency.

Meanwhile, the Superior Provision Co. of Massillon developed a great product with no image. It was a hot dog. By 1960, the company was disappointed with sales. Its product had no identity, especially among the women who bought 85 percent of the groceries.

This was a challenge made for the fertile mind of Vic Decker. He came up with the idea to personalize the sausage, call him Frankie,



REPOSITORY JIM HILLIBISH

**FRANKIE AND KETCHUP** Frankie has a new friend, Ketchup. The Milwaukee Brewers sausage mascot race, which included a fight with a Pittsburgh Pirate first baseman in 2003, sparked another idea at Fresh Mark Meats, parent company of Sugardale and Superior meats of Stark County. At the end of the fifth inning of each home game, the Indians mount the Sugardale Hot Dog Race with Ketchup, Mustard and Onion mascots. Frankie is not invited, as he is a Superior product and not a Sugardale Coney, which is the brand sold at the ballpark.

dress him in a chef's hat and apron and add a wink.

Next came an ad campaign still remembered in Merchandising magazine. It was a new concept. It made sense:

Use all the media. Start with a series of teasers stating merely "Frankie is Coming," "Who's Frankie?" and "Where's Frankie?"

This lasted a week, the buildup to the rollout of Frankie the Keener Wiener. Frankie first appeared in northern Ohio newspapers on

a Sunday. The first ads proclaimed, "Ladies, here's the new man in your life, Frankie, your Superior Meats chef."

Frankie was on all Superior wiener packages, billboards, delivery trucks and balloons and hats in grocery stores. The company built giant, paper-mâché Frankies. Clerks wore Frankie buttons. Even the company's letterhead sported Frankie's cute grin.

Frankie became an adviser to housewives on how to cook more nutritious meals, star-

ring himself, of course.

The campaign worked. Frankie and his theme song became famous. Superior increased production and entered new markets. Vic Decker fixed the notion of a talking sausage in our minds, and they sold by the millions.

Decker died in 1985, but his campaign became a model for launching many other products.