

7-year-old to compete in national Oreo stacking competition

COLCHESTER, Ill. (AP)—Seven-year-old Nathaniel Keithley has a good reason for getting into the Oreo cookies: He's got to practice.

Nathaniel leaves Sunday for the national Oreo stacking competition at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., where he will have one shot at stacking the most cookies in 30 seconds to earn a national title.

But with a wobbly dining room table and a little brother who likes to eat the cookies, practicing can be a challenge.

Nathaniel's mother, Teri Haffner, said her son qualified by stacking

34 cookies in 30 seconds at a Nabisco Co. booth at a K-mart store. She later found out from Nabisco that the world record is 30.

If he wins the national title, the second-grader would win a \$20,000 savings bond and a walk-on role on the television show "Honey I Shrunk the Kids"—plus a year's supply of Oreos, Haffner said.

Nathaniel said his friends made up a new nickname for him.

"They're calling me 'Oreo Boy' on the bus," he said. "A lot of people are also wondering if I'll get sick of Oreo (cookies). The answer is 'no.'"

Escaped python winds up under Hammond man's car

HAMMOND, La. (AP)—Police had to contend with a hissing, writhing 6-foot Burmese python after a 9-year-old boy found it in a driveway, lying under the family car.

"My son came in the house and said there was a snake under the car," said John Wilkinson. "I thought he meant an itty bitty thing. Imagine my surprise."

Wilkinson called police, who had him put his car in neutral and push it up the concrete driveway.

The snake stayed calm until Sgt. Charlie Pittman, wearing gardening

gloves, grabbed it at the base of the neck while Officer Matt Savona held the tail. Then it hissed, writhed and bared its teeth.

They had started to lower the snake into a garbage can when animal control officers arrived with a pillowcase.

The snake was not poisonous and would probably not have hurt a person, animal control officer Lani Loyd said. However, a small pet might have made a meal for the python.

David Holloway, a 20-year-old

college student who lives several blocks from Wilkinson, had a happy reunion with the python, named Kamikaze, Loyd said. A few days earlier, the snake had slithered out of a cage that Holloway forgot to latch.

"When we let her out of the sack and she saw him, she was pretty happy," Loyd said. "Believe it or not, they can recognize their owners."

Japanese pick instant noodles as food of the century

TOKYO (AP)—For Japanese, the food of the century is far from gourmet—instant noodles, hamburgers, curry and packaged lunches from convenience stores, according to a new survey.

The survey, by Japan Management Association Research Institute, a Tokyo think-tank, asked 1,493 people between the ages of 16 and 69 to pick three food items that represent the century.

The top choice was instant noodles, picked by 79 percent of respondents, followed by hamburgers at 34 percent and prepackaged heat-

and-eat curry at 28 percent.

Other picks were packaged lunches sold at the omnipresent convenience stores, with 6 percent, and sushi and colas, each with 3 percent.

"Instant noodles are one of the few foods that originated in Japan and have spread throughout the world. People are proud of that," said Fumiaki Kato, one of the researchers who carried out the survey in September and October. It was released Wednesday.

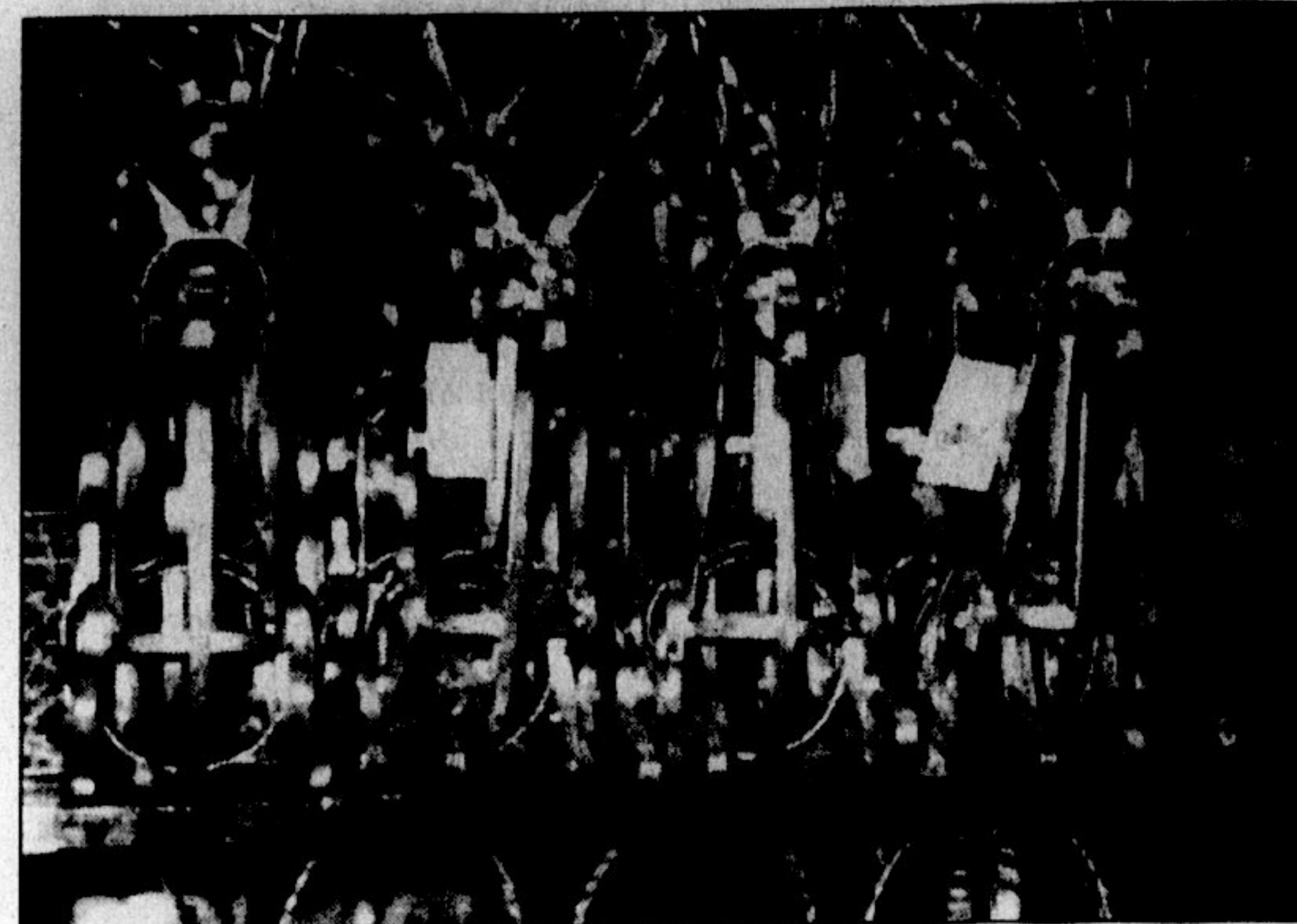
The average Japanese eats more than 40 packs of instant noodles a year. There are about 720 different flavors and types on the market, an industry group says. They were invented in 1958 by Momofuku Ando, founder of Nissin Food Products Co.

"Everyone from the emperor to high-school kids eats instant noodles," Hiroshi Yamaya, spokesman for the Japan Association of Instant Food Manufacturers, said Thursday.

Asked to describe the eating habits of Japanese in the 20th century, 63 percent of respondents said "instant food," 43 percent replied "fast food" and 30 percent said "Western-style" food.

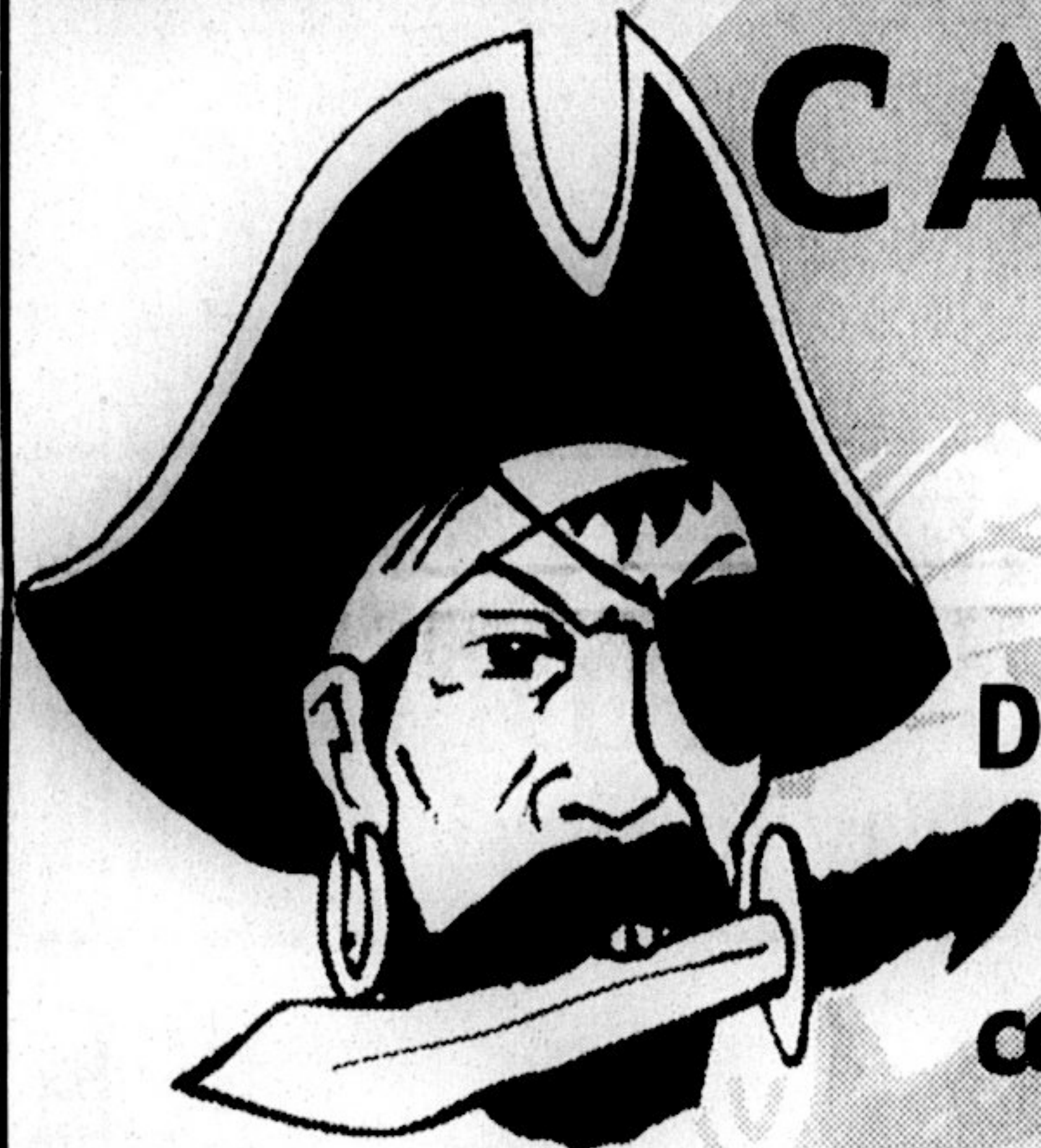
"We could say that the 20th century is a period that places a lot of emphasis on convenience in food," Kato said.

Miniature reindeer line up in preparation for Christmas



Dasher, Dancer, Prancer and Vixen, creatively made and non-traditional in form eagerly wait for a customer to buy them and make them part of their holiday decorating tradition.(photo by Patrick Raulet)

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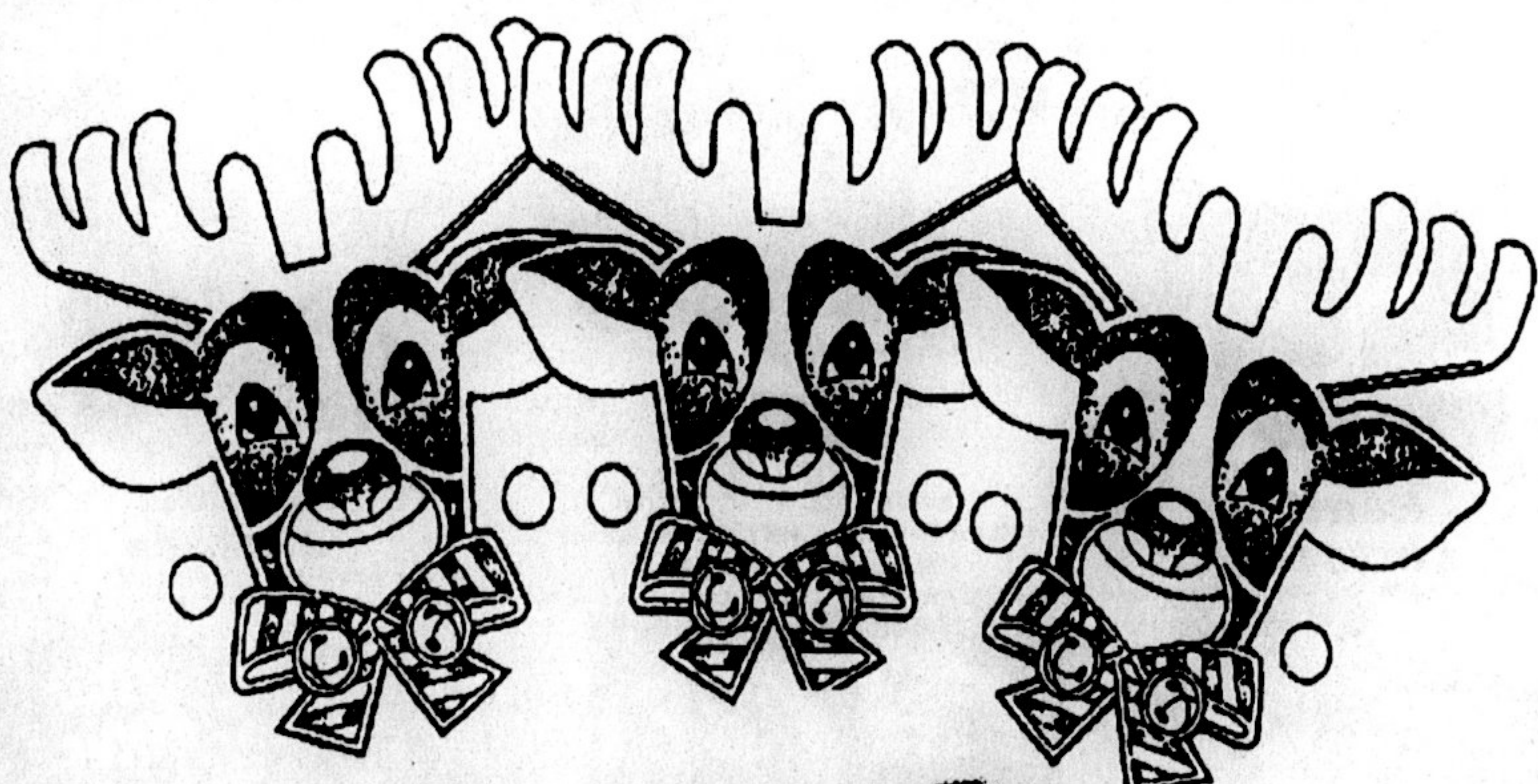
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