

Behind the Mr. Softee Conehead

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Ice cream or home delivery were nothing new in 1956, but when two brothers in West Philadelphia combined the two, Mister Softee was born.

Nowadays, the bowtie-wearing conehead can be found on approximately 700 trucks across the United States, Canada, and even as far away as China.

John Conway, the company's president, said that his dad, William, and his dad's brother, James, started Mister Softee with one truck in West Philly.

They soon added more before moving into its current headquarters in Runnemede, N.J., in 1958.

In Runnemede, where Mister Softee trucks are fitted with generators, coolers and Electro Freeze soft-serve machines, the company's franchise program took off.

A franchise owner pays Mister Softee approximately \$100,000 for the truck and anywhere from \$3,000 to \$3,500 per year in royalty fees. According to Mister Softee's Web site, the company is the largest ice-cream-truck franchise in the country, with most of its trucks in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

Each franchise gets a specified distribution territory, along with their signature theme song to draw the kids in.

"I've heard that song so many times in my life, I don't even hear it anymore when it's on," Conway said.

The Mister Softee jingle was written in 1960 by a Philadelphia ad agency. The song has sheet music and lyrics, which can be found on the company's Web site.