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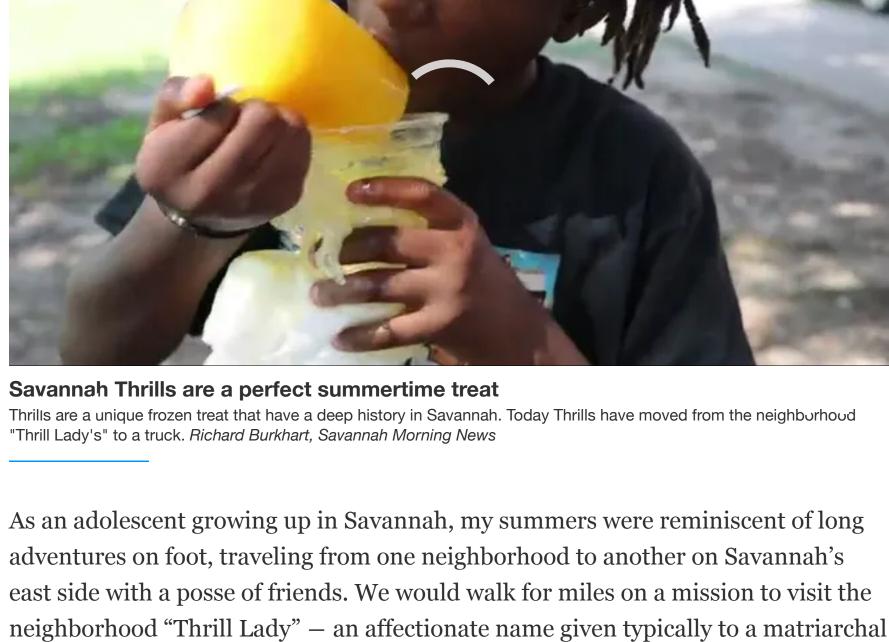
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Legals

The history of Savannah's Thrill Ladies is kept alive by a family recipe

FOOD

and a food truck **Martina Yvette** For Savannah Morning News Published 7:04 a.m. ET Sept. 15, 2023 | **Updated 8:28 a.m. ET Sept. 18, 2023**



thing we were looking for was the frozen sweet treat, the Thrill, a combination of Kool-Aid packets, water, sugar, and sometimes candy or fruit. These classic frozen cups were

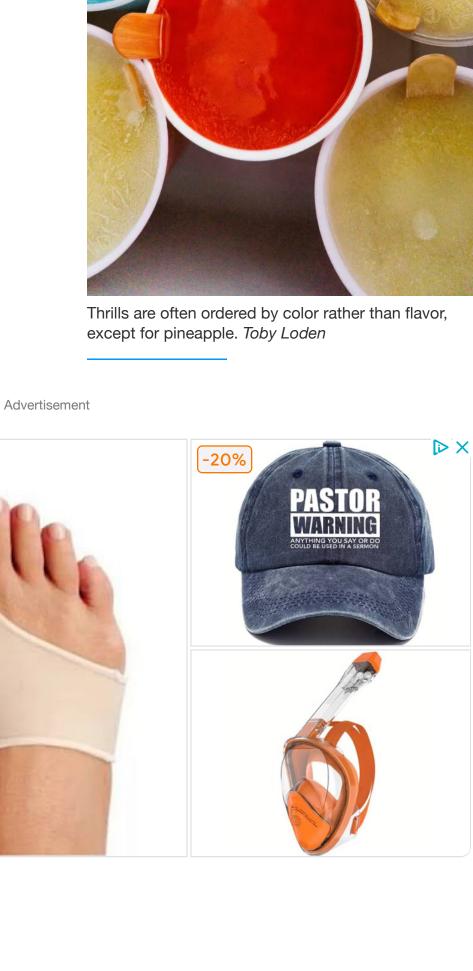
Black woman who used her front porch as a storefront to sell snacks such as hot

pickles or sausages, chips, boiled peanuts, candies and sunflower seeds. But, the

know where to find them — that would elicit loud slurps, brain freezes and numb hands. Though simple in ingredients, Thrills were the catalyst of obsession because of how cool they kept you and how the sweetness from each bite created a chilling sensation of pleasure.

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Savannah's best kept secret — you had to



Thrills are a unique frozen treat that have a deep history in Savannah. Today Thrills have moved from the neighborhood "Thrill Ladies" to a truck. Richard Burkhart **Savannah's Thrilling history** The history of this staple of Savannah summers would not be possible without the entrepreneurial effort of mostly Black women who used the sales of sweets from their front porches as a means for extra income. Like many "Thrill Ladies," Ms.

Rosa Lee Williams started her first thrill storefront from her porch at a former

more than 38 years ago because she had asthma and needed to provide for her

family after her husband passed away.

Using the traditional method of thrill-

making, Rochelle doused her popsicle

water to weigh down the wooden sticks

so that they would not rise during the

sticks in a mixture of corn syrup and

address on West 37th Street. The widowed mother of seven started her business

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It was not unfamiliar to go up to a porch covered in green turf to ring an oftentimes

out-of-tune doorbell, wait for either the sounds of a sweet voice telling you to "hold

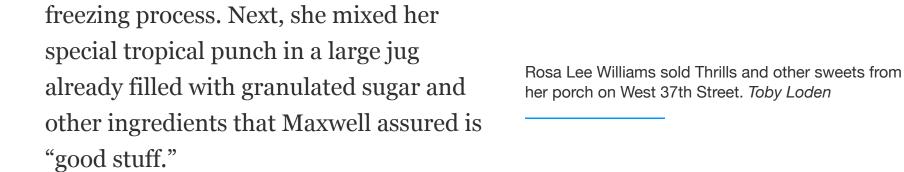
on" or a barking dog that announced your arrival. The process was familiar across

raspberry), green (green apple) and pineapple, the only color ever associated with

wooden Popsicle stick or run the plastic cup under hot water to release the Thrill.

neighborhoods. We ordered them by color: red (tropical punch), blue (blue

its fruit flavor. After receiving your requested treat you would twist the jumbo



Williams recalled, "I heard that other women were selling thrills, and I decided to

start selling my thrills at that time." William, now 85-years-old, is no longer

physically able to make thrills, but relies on the help of her daughter Rochelle

Maxwell. Maxwell and Williams make more than 40 thrills daily to satisfy

customers who are known to buy anywhere between 10-20 thrills at a time.

walker on the side of the kitchen and gave us formal directions. She reflected on how many people from her community on East 33rd Street have grown to call her the "grandmother of the block." In earlier days, she would reward young children in the community with a thrill for report card scores or staying out of trouble. Many of her past customers returned the favor by helping out around her home or just extending pleasantries.

As we slowly poured the concoction into individual cups, Williams sat in her rolling

keeper of Savannah's thrill legacy is Leon "So Icey" Williams who, with his son and business partner, Leon Williams Jr., founded a gourmet thrill enterprise based upon a recipe handed down from his grandmother 30 years before. Eula Mae Williams, AKA Ms. Doll, started selling thrills from her Victorian

neighborhood home between Waldburg and Jefferson streets in the 1970s. She

"Everybody has a gift, but who could have

thought a thrill that doesn't get as much

exposure as ice cream, would be Savannah's

[Savannah] were blessed with the best name

Of course, with the price of ingredients these days, the cost of thrills now range

"thrillogist" because of his gourmet recipes that feature fresh fruits, offers more

combination of watermelon and piña colada; the Kim Gusby, named for the WSAV

from \$1.25 to \$3.00, depending on the vendor. Leon Williams, known as a

than 25 flavors, including the Badrinna (named after his wife), which is a

best kept secret. They're named differently, but

because when you get a good thrill, it gives you

Leon Williams, owner So Icey Thrills, demonstrates how to remove a Thrill from the cup. Richard Burkhart/Savannah

Though thrills have been often tied to Savannah traditions, variations on thrills

pop up in other communities such as Jacksonville, Charleston and New Orleans. A

Morning News

Thoughts from a 'thrillologist'

charged 10 cents for a thrill.

anchor and journalist; and the Ms. Doll, a pineapple thrill with chunks of pineapples inside. Advertisement

that excitement."

LEON WILLIAMS

Leon Williams has set himself apart from the traditional thrill culture through small but significant changes, such as adding a spoon to his thrills instead of wooden sticks, which helps with freezing. It also allows the customer to easily obtain any fruit pieces that may have been missed.

Customers lineup at the So Icey Thrills truck during an event in Forsyth Park. Richard Burkhart/Savannah Morning News

He started his thrill business as a way to test out frozen fruit items for his friend,

the late pastor Gregory Tyson of First Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church. Leon

created ingenious thrill flavors that not only sold out quickly, but stayed solidified

longer. Leon says that he knew he had a market when he started selling out at the

church, then located on 4370 ACL Blvd. He laughed as he mentioned that Tyson

Leon attributes a lot of his thrill making process to his faith. He said that if he had

to describe his thrill-making style it would be "grace and mercy, because what you

get when you taste my thrills is the taste of grace that will have you saying, 'Lord,

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said that "he wasn't sure if people were coming to church for the word or his

thrills."

have mercy.'"

doesn't get as much exposure as ice cream would be Savannah's best-kept secret. They're named differently, but we [Savannah] were blessed with the best name because when you get a good thrill, it gives you that excitement."

He added that "everybody has a gift, but who could have thought a thrill that

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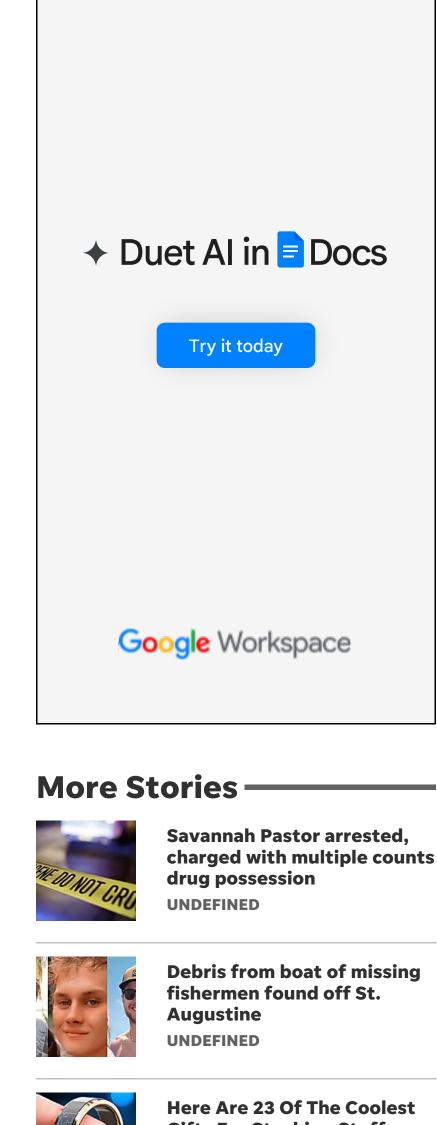
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