

Oct 17, 1979

Opinion

Perspective

By Jamie Buckingham

Mother's Mold



Back during World War II, when a lot of things were in short supply on the home front, it was up to the enterprising housewife to invent ways to overcome the shortages. When butter was impossible to find, my mother bought two cows and we churned our own — using first the old pump churn and later a more modern paddle churn. Chickens provided eggs and a mule and wagon took us to various social functions when gasoline was unavailable.

My mother solved the scarcity of soap by saving all the used soap bars in the house to melt into a conglomerate for reuse — we called it Mother's Mold. There was a container in each bathroom, in the kitchen and the laundry room for used bars of soap. If we took a trip, we always brought home the used soap from the hotel — or from relatives.

When she had enough, she would put the used bars in a large mold. She would then melt a few other bars and pour the melted soap into the mold. When this

hardened she would slice it into squares for us to use in the bathtub.

It was always interesting to take a bath using Mother's Mold. For some reason the greens and whites were always dominant. In particular was the mold influenced by the pieces of green, translucent soap that smelled like weeds, which my older brother brought home from the Navy. Adding just one hunk of that green soap to the Mother's Mold affected everything — like putting a pinch of curry in the soup, it's there forever. But through the green (or sometimes the white) you could spot the various other bars of soap in the conglomerate. The pink Life Buoy stood out in particular. So did the black Lava soap.

Ivory soap, which claimed to be 99.44 percent pure something, seemed to lose its purity when melted into Mother's Mold. But since it melted easy, it always played a dominant part in the mixture.

Even though Mother's Mold was exciting, it never had the strength nor the cleaning power of a single bar of soap. It lacked the perfume of Lux, the scouring strength of Lava and the alkalinity of Octagon. It wouldn't float like Ivory nor did it attack B.O. like Life Buoy.

Recently I've become aware my life is much like Mother's Mold. As I have put more and more things into it, it has begun to lose the distinctive qualities of uniqueness. There are times when I wake up in the morning and wonder exactly who I am. I realize if I pare down I can no longer be all things to all people. But it's becoming more difficult to mix Lava and Ivory in my life — and I think I'm going to have to soon make a decision as to which one I am. And stick to it.

In the meantime, all those flavors do add a certain excitement — even if the mixture doesn't seem to do any job exceptionally well.