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If you pulled the stick up, the ashes would run down in the lye, through the hole, so you don't touch the stick. And af? ter awhile it would stop dripping, you know, dripping, down in the tub that was underneath. It's just the lye goes down in that tub, it's just clean as anything. You let it sit there until you have enough lye to start boiling it. (The water is taking the lye from the ashes?) That's right. (How much would be enough?) Oh heavens, there'd be gallons. Clear as anything, and clean, because there were no ashes going out through this hole with the stick in it. It was just as good as any strainer. And then you had a big boiler. And you made a fire outside, wherever you had your boiler lying. Put this big pot on it, and you put the lye in that. And boil it, and boil it. Perhaps you'd boil it for a day, perhaps less. And the women were used to it, you know, they used to know just how long to let it boil. (Would you see any? thing that would give you a sign?) No. I'll tell you, the only sign they'd have, was to have a dish and a spoon, and they took so much out of the pot, and put a lit? tle bit of water with it, and mixed it. And they could tell whether it was time to put the grease in it, or time to take it off, or time to put it away. It thickens, you know, thickens a little bit, but it doesn't get hard. And then you'd put fat in it. You had to add grease of some kind. (Where would you get grease?) Well, that would be saved (7) from butchering in the fall. I don't think it mattered much whether it was fresh or not. I never remember of that. But I know sometimes it wouldn't be fresh, it wouldn't smell too good. But when once it went in the lye and boiled, that was all right, there was no bad smell of it. So it was good. Animal fat. Any animal at all. Pork or beef or sheep or lamb or anything. And it would dissolve--it didn't matter what it was like--it would dissolve. The heat and the lye. You wouldn't have to stir it. The boiling would keep it stirred enough. (Did it take a lot of fat?) Quite a bit, quite a bit, but I wouldn't have any idea just how much. You had to watch it. When it would boil, it would be apt to boil over. I remember my mother sitting there. And she always had a little dipper of cold water, and she'd put a drop of that in it if she saw that it was coming over the top. To make it stop boiling, you know. Oh well, heav? ens, how they knew their work. And she'd be there with her knitting, and watching the pot of soap. Boy, they weren't spend? ing many minutes idle. That wasn't a heavy job, either. Quite an easy job. But you couldn't leave it one minute. You couldn't turn your back to it. Because just as sure as you would, it would be boiled over. You had to watch it. (How long would she be boiling it?) Well, I would say a whole day. And then when it was all through boiling, they were putting it in another big barrel or cask. They were pouring it in that, and putting so much water in it. And then stirring it and stirring it and stirring it, until it was all stirred. And then you had your soft soap, to do for a whole year. (Was the soft soap used for your face?) Oh no. Nor the Gillis lye soap, either; nobody ever used that for their face. It would be as hard and white as anything. But always for scrubbing and washing and cleaning. (What was soft soap used for?) For a washing, whenever you washed at a brook. That's when it was good. We always used it in the washtub. (This Gillis lye soap, was that made differently?) Yes, altogether. You



bought a can of Gillis lye. And it used to tell on the can how much fat to put in it.
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