

Nuluv Shaving Soap: A Review

By Mack McKinney

Wet shaving, as it has become known as, is perhaps a man's compensation for the dual insult of having to be racked out of bed at ungodly hours and then, if that is not bad enough, complying with societal standards of having to attack ones' facial growth with a sharp implement. By following the time-honored traditions and rejecting the more modern, easier, but rougher implementations of shaving that seem to cater more to the marketers than to men, one can at the very least mitigate the shock to the system that a new day brings.

Wet shaving involves using a cream or soap as a lubricant, a scary-sharp blade in an old-fashioned safety razor or, for the real purist, a straight razor, and (wait for it...) water. Preferably warm water. If you've never tried this, here's the nickel tour:

Best done right after getting out of the shower, use your dripping-wet shaving brush (you DO have a shaving brush, right?) to scoop up some shaving soap (no, not Lifebouy, but real, honest-to-goodness shaving soap) or shaving cream (not the aerosol stuff – that is NOT shaving cream, it's chemicals!) and mix with more warm water until a nice, light lather is produced. It should stand on the brush and not drip off, but it should not be thick – more vigorous mixing is required if it is too thick. After you have your lather, splash more hot water on your face. The goal here is to get those pores open. Use the brush to lather up your face (and do a little exfoliating at the same time. Just don't tell your significant other that you are doing that part!) Once lathered, you pick up your vintage razor and with a very light touch...

I use a 1962 Gillette Super Speed safety razor, exclusively with Feather razor blades. I have a custom shaving brush made using AAA-grade Badger hair with a cocobolo handle. And until now I have been very satisfied with George Trumper's shaving creams, sold in a tub, so when I was asked to test drive Nuluv's shaving soap, this was a slight, or perhaps a significant, variation, so certainly the Trumper's is my plumb bob.

The first thing I liked about the soap, even before the lid was off, turned out to be the tub that it comes in. If you were to take a cross-section of old George's shaving cream tub, you would notice that the tub sort of recesses in at the top, I suppose to have the lid flush with the outside of the tub, which it ultimately is not. What this tub DOES do is narrow at the opening, making getting the last of the shaving cream difficult to get out of the container. Nuluv's container has a much wider opening; just enough to allow the same, sleek flush lid (these things are important – to someone!) with much less of a recess – just enough to keep the soap lather from splashing over the sides of the container whilst one whips the soap to a lather. Very clever on Nuluv's part. Great strategy!

Once the lid is off, you are struck by a firm but pleasing aroma. I have no idea what Nuluv feeds their goats to make them come up with this particular scent, but being allergic to most perfumed products, I'm sort of a non-scents guy (pun intended.) This is a nice scent, does not bother my allergies, and enhances the ambiance of the shaving experience.

Coming from being used to Trumper's shaving cream, which is quite a bit lighter in consistency – almost like peanut butter – the Nuluv shaving cream is quite a bit firmer, exactly what I expected in a soap. It

takes different amounts of water to activate it than the cream does, and it should. I've found that I don't need to employ a secondary vessel to do my mixing in, but carrying sufficient water on the brush as I mix right in Nuluv's tub works well. One less bowl to clean up (or coffee mug in the case of this bottom-feeder.) Mixing the soap seems to take neither longer nor shorter than the Trumper's.

When one applies shaving cream to one's face with a brush, the technique is to use vigorous wrist work and a sort of back-and-forth whisking to spread the goods. I found that the soap spread well, and that it didn't seem to need as thick of a build-up as what I was used to in order to afford adequate lubrication between the blade and my face. I also found, much to my surprise, that the soap gave a very strong cooling sensation; I don't know if it is actually cooling (and therefore prematurely closing my pores, which is a bad thing) or if it has perhaps some aloe mixed in, which would begin the healing process for one's face even as one traumatizes it. I will be needing to check with Nuluv to get the lowdown on why that might be.

Now, I'm very methodical when I shave. I start in a certain spot, finish in a certain spot, and try to replicate this pattern every time I shave. I end up doing my upper lip last. There are reasons for this, I promise, but this brings me to the only other possible drawback to Nuluv's soap that I have found – and perhaps this is just an old Trumper user from way back who is set in his ways. I cannot lather my entire face, set the brush down, and finish shaving my entire face without the soap drying out on my upper lip. As a result I have shifted my technique a little bit; I now lather cheeks and neck, and leave the lip lathering for last. Hardly a game-changer, but then reviews are supposed to get pretty technical or nobody believes the author.

Would I spend cash money on Nuluv's shaving soap? You betcha! The resulting shave is every bit as smooth and gentle as the one I have come to rely on from the shop that has been making this stuff since Queen Victoria was a glimmer in her momma's eye (or so...) The end result is the proof; I get a very comfortable shave every time, I do not use up an excessive number of razor blades (this has been known to happen when I was forced to use the cheap aerosol stuff – twice as many, as a matter of fact), and my bride especially likes the whisker-free environment. Which means I do, too! I don't know what price point Nuluv is going to choose for their product, but I predict that I may be shifting in the near future and recommending this product. I wonder if they are going to develop a soap in Violet...

Rev. Mack McKinney is a Pastor, Yacht Designer, and self-proclaimed shaving expert. This latter is trustworthy, as he has spent the last 37-or-so years finding creative ways to express blood from his face. He lives with his bride, Elizabeth, two energetic Brittany's, a horse, and a donkey in Center Point, Texas.