I've come to see that before my wife was a wife, a mother, a companion and a homemaker, she was and is a person. She doesn't have to live within certain feminine roles. Her identity includes much more than motherhood or wifehood. I don't understand what all of this implies; neither does she. But we're working to grasp it better.

Here are several positive decisions we've made in our home which I've rephrased in the form of suggestions.

1. **Any family member can do housework.** Previously I'd seen housework as my wife's responsibility with other family members assisting her. I see now that any one of us can and should perform any household function. When one of the children asks, “But why should I do that?” I answer, “Because it needs to be done, that's why.” For example, we take turns vacuuming, not to “help” Mom, but because the carpet it dirty.

2. **A sense of ownership is needed.** I wondered often why my wife didn't seem to appreciate my offer to wash the dishes. I know now that she didn't appreciate it because my attitude showed that I was doing her a favor; I was helping her with her dishes. The same was true of other chores either I or one of the children would occasionally do. We were saying to her, “I'll clean your windows, sweep your kitchen floor, set your table.” We lacked a sense of ownership; it was her house, not ours. No wonder she didn't show appreciation!

3. **Mom is not the “bad-guy.”** Since I perceived housework to be her responsibility, each time she needed help she had to ask for it. So when one of her requests inconvenienced us, she became the “interrupter-of-good-TV-shows,” the “spoiler-of-fun” or the “complainer” even when she was doing something for our benefit. She had tried to establish good work habits and a routine for the family but tired of having to “crack the whip” and more or less gave in to our indifference. It was startling how quickly the routine was established once I decided to support her.

4. **Excuses are just that—excuses.** All along I thought I was sharing the housework, but I’ve realized otherwise. Though I washed dishes, swept the floor, vacuumed, changed light bulbs, and picked up strewn clothes and magazines—I did that only when the mood hit me, or when she wasn't feeling well. (If housework had paid $1 an hour, I doubt that I would have earned more than $300 over the last 20 years!) Handy excuses exempted me: “I don’t know how to cook” (neither did she when we married); “I can’t shop because I can’t find the groceries at the store”, and “You can do certain chores so much better than I can.” It seldom, if ever, crossed my mind that since she had learned to cook and to do all of the tasks on that endless housework list, I could, too. The truth was that I wasn’t interested. I didn’t want to learn. I enjoyed being “helpless” and profited from it greatly. Now the children and I are learning.

5. **Watch the language.** Throughout their adolescence I heard our