older sons tell jokes portraying women as sex objects or as helpless, hysterical and humorous. Though I knew better, I told a number of such stories myself, all in good fun—I thought.

In addition, I’m sure I left the impression with my sons that there are two kinds of language: “man talk” and “woman talk.” They learned that when they saw me leave the kitchen whenever a neighbor came to drink coffee with my wife. At the time I reasoned that the women might want privacy. The real reason was that I felt uncomfortable listening to “woman talk” which usually revolved around cooking, curtains, children and clothes. How I wish I could re-program our older sons’ attitudes and language, but it’s too late—they’re away from home at college and on their own.

6. Set the example. I am trying to influence our two sons and a daughter who are still at home by cleaning up my language, washing away sexist slurs and stereotypes. Doing this is not difficult if I remember to think of men and women as persons, not as members of the opposite sexes.

TV proved helpful in this struggle. One evening a commercial portrayed a pre-adolescent stewardess serving a pre-adolescent jet-liner pilot his favorite cereal. The commercial prompted me to ask the children, “Why couldn’t the girl be the pilot? After all, women have been flying planes for years.” They readily agreed that women could be professional pilots; the boys, however, were slower to agree that men should be stewards.

Though these episodes have influenced me significantly—given me a new focus on housework and a sensitivity to language—I’m not kidding myself, I’m still a chauvinist, but an awakened one, thanks to Pete, who built a nest in my conscience; to Rocky, who taught me a new trick; and to those dirty towels, which enabled me to hang my own “wash” on the line and look at it.

According to the experts, liberation is a journey, not a destination. I find I have more questions than answers, more problems than solutions. Though I have a distance to go, I’m painfully aware that I’m on the way.