

The Abbotts as Seen on “Trading Spouses”: How Fox Edited out Reality

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

December 17, 2004

You wouldn't believe the extent that deception played in the last two episodes of Trading Spouses. Portraying a family's core values diametrically opposite to the truth through an elaborate string of lies is dishonorable and cowardly. We did not apply to be 'actors' in a slanderous twist on our life. In fact *they* contacted *us* through our website. We agreed to do the show only upon their continuous assurance that this 'reality' show would be a *truthful*, albeit condensed, reflection of who we are.

Below is an overview of Fox's 'professional' approach and practices, followed by a detailed account of the scenes and sentences they fabricated; deliberate actions to carry out the deception.

We believe that exploiting families in this way, and children in particular, is ethically unacceptable for a society which prides its family values so highly.

Sincerely,

The Abbott Family

(From the Dec. 6th and 13th episodes of Fox TV's Trading Spouses.)

Overview

In every episode of Trading Spouses, the producers match up two families with as many differing qualities as possible. This was certainly the case with the Abbott and Lowe families: different race, diet, religion, hobby, music, and so on. The only true similarity is that both families are good decent people. The biggest difference between us, however, was in the area of tolerance. We did not project our values onto Vickie, but rather accepted and loved her for who she was. Vickie, on the other hand *did* project her values onto us. She was intolerant of our life and our ways and she held to that throughout. That was the key.

After the people in charge of editing saw our two families realities, **they chose to make our family's reality into a lie to justify Vickie's intolerance.** To accomplish this, they often portrayed Carl (the father) exactly opposite to how he is through an elaborate string of lies. In television, it seems, a 'reality show' only needs to be 'good' and 'entertaining'. Truth is of **no** concern. For instance, they underhandedly used Carl's brother's death to falsely portray him as unable to let go of his children (See the next page). A vile lie to make *their lie* more believable.

An experience like this should begin with informed consent. Screwing over adults is one thing; it's despicable to involve children. In our case, to have their father portrayed to the larger community as a *controlling brain washer* is cruel, especially in a country where a father perceived as standing in the way of his children's independence is tantamount to child abuse. Sure, our close friends know this is a lie, but many of our neighbors and acquaintances don't. The American family is in crisis already; it doesn't need Fox twisting the dagger.

For more information go to: www.PlayingByEar.com/ts/

The Trading Spouses Parade of Lies

Lie #1: Carl runs everything at home. Luke and Kyle have been brainwashed by him, and he controls their life.

Reality: Carl has done everything he can *not* to control Luke and Kyle's life. His philosophy regarding good parenting? "Patiently wait and allow the flowers to bloom in their own way and in their own time." (His words.)

Fabrications: Oh my, too many to count! Here are only a few of the most vociferous ones:

Instead of being happy that we were going to get money for a used car that we were going to buy anyway, Carl said, "The car // for Luke it's // upsetting!"

Instead of being happy about receiving money for new bedrooms that we were going to build anyway, Carl was shown shaking his head and saying, "Heavens, no."

Instead of refuting Vickie's opinion, Luke agreed with it by saying: "My dad especially wants to // protect us from the outside world and keep // Kyle and I here at home."

The Carl-Vickie-confrontation-with-the-globe scene is edited in such a way that you get the impression that Carl can't, to quote Vickie, "Trust them that they'll be OK by themselves."

Instead of tying in Carl's comment – "No, you're not old enough . . . 18, 28, 38, 48 . . ." – with being old enough to understand a deep philosophical concept, the comment is used to portray Carl as not believing Luke is old enough to be on his own.

Carl has seen so much trouble and hardship in his travels around the world that he doesn't want his children to go out and be exposed to those hardships.

Because Carl was not with his brother (Mark) when he died, Carl is afraid to let his children be on their own, because he doesn't want to lose them.

Bottom Line: Although Vickie believed we were good people, she could not understand why we chose to live the way we do (home-school, etc), so she came to the conclusion that we were brainwashed. The editors crafted a reality around that hypothesis, and did not offer any of our conflicting arguments. That they exploited the death of Carl's brother to suit their story is especially disgraceful.

Lie #2: Expanding on the lie above, Luke has a great 'epiphany,' in which he finally sees how he is being held back, and can't wait to 'break free' and 'be his own man.'

Reality: There is nothing from which to break free.

Fabrications: During the driving lesson, instead of including any of my side of the debate, all the arguments presented were Vickie's. Actually, almost all the arguments presented throughout the entire show were Vickie's.

After the lesson, Luke says, "What Vickie had said made me think of // things that // I never really thought about before. // Yeah, // from time to time // I think // wouldn't it be nice if things got a little more exciting?"

On the last day, instead of showing any part of the last three-hour interview, in which I explained in great detail why I disagreed with Vickie on a number of issues, the editors stitch together the following sentences:

"This whole experience with Vickie is // a major turning point in my life. // My dad especially wants to // protect us from the outside world and keep // Kyle and I here at home. // But now I // have a lot of desire to just // get out and go somewhere different. // Who knows. // I guess you could say that this is the first day of the rest of my life."

Bottom Line: Not only was a lie fabricated, but Luke's statements were fabricated to show him believing in the lie. It's the perfect cover-up. Thanks, FOX.

Lie #3: Carl is adamant about being barefoot, and wants to ensure his kids have nothing to do with shoes.

Reality: Carl always wore shoes for nearly fifty years. Then his kids came along, and never asked nor wanted shoes; they were very comfortable with their bare feet. After several years of this, their father decided to try going barefoot, and never really had a reason to go back.

Fabrications: Carl explained, "We don't wear shoes as a matter of principle!"

Carl said "no, no" to Vickie's 'suggestion' that Luke and Kyle should go shoe shopping the next day.

Regarding new shoes and new things, Carl said "I'd sooner die."

Bottom Line: This lie was created to support the (fabricated) storyline that Carl has control over his kids.

Lie #4: Our Taoist beliefs involve flying in ethereal spacecraft and experiencing the “virtual self.”

Reality: Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only a blatant lie, but a gross distortion of our faith.

Fabrications: Carl said, “I want // Vickie // to just // *phhhhhht!*, you know, and // experience this cosmic // saucer; the virtual self! An imaginary world which we carry around in the brain!”

He connected Taoism with, “It’s like that spaceship . . . you go up and then you come back down again.”

Bottom Line: Imagine editing a Christian family to portray them as worshipers of Satan.

Lie #5: Carl was impatient with Vickie because she isn’t doing well in yoga.

Reality: Carl couldn’t have been happier with the way Vickie approached yoga. She was really giving it a great effort, and that’s all that counts

Fabrications: Carl says, “I tried to show // Vickie // how to do it, // I could feel that she wasn’t // taking me seriously.”

Bottom Line: Carl’s negative comment on yoga goes against everything he has taught in his forty-odd years of yoga instruction, and serves to slander Carl’s beliefs and practice. It is also discouraging to anyone who may be practicing or considering yoga for themselves, as it goes against the spirit of yoga.

Lie #6: Leslie was trying to push her agenda, namely yoga, on the Lowes, and was frustrated that they are not cooperating. Hope (Vickie’s daughter) was totally uncooperative.

Reality: Leslie did yoga on her own at first, but the rest of the family was interested and wanted to participate, which she welcomed them to.

Fabrications: Leslie said, “It’s the first day, // and, I want to // introduce yoga // and show the new family,” even though she did yoga alone the first day.

Leslie is shown giving Hope a rude awakening on the first day in order to introduce yoga to her, although this was actually the third day, when Hope asked Leslie to wake her up so she could do yoga with her (Hope and Leslie were and are great friends).

Leslie is frustrated that Hope is not participating in yoga, and says, “Hope // seemed to not want to do it at all. // I was // upset.”

Hope is mad at Leslie for showing her yoga against her will, and says, “Leslie, // she’s one of them crazy types. // I ain’t gonna lie, she kinda // sucks.”

Even though she was having a blast with the Lowes, Leslie says, “Things are not // going very well // with the Lowes. // I feel mocked.”

When Leslie finally met Vickie, even though she got along famously with Hope, “At the beginning, I didn’t get to connect with // Hope. // It was so hard . . . ”

Bottom Line: Leslie was portrayed as an unhappy pushy person, and Hope as a rude, lazy brat. They were mutually upset with each other’s portrayal on TV. This is the only distortion so far that was somewhat corrected in the second episode.

Lies, Lies and more Lies...

These are only a few of the most serious transgressions. There were many other distortions that were just as blatant. For example, we have coffee and several television sets around the house. However, when Vickie asked us if we had TV and coffee; the editors dubbed *out our* “yes” and dubbed *in* “no” for the answer.