

Re: Danny Shelton replies to CA posts

Re: Danny Shelton replies to CA posts - 11/01/04 10:44 PM

Posted by: [NormF](#)

I too was the recipient recently of an e-mail from Danny after the online chat with Linda. I was reluctant to do anything with it at first until I'd had time to think it over. Bille's argument that all should be posted convinced me to do this. So here it is.

For the record, I have also sent Danny an e-mail reply today attaching a copy of this post for his information.

What follows is actually in two parts. First, the message as sent. Second, my responses to various parts of his letter to me. I hope that together this is helpful reading to everyone, and I'm sure that, as always, it will provoke further thought and discussion.

I should note that Danny seems to be understanding the neighborhood a little better as time goes by. There are other messages of his since this one that look better. I see an improvement in tone in his correspondence, and a less adversarial approach to discussion. Of course, the question of style versus substance remains an open one as always.

I've noticed Danny is still unhappy over some of the criticism around here. Partly, that's due, as I see it, to the fact that there will always be some posters who really come across, how shall I say it, poorly and really rankle those they attack. The anonymity of Internet chat is quite unlike anything else before it, and for some folk it really brings out the worst in them. People who would never say such harsh, crude, mean-spirited, unthoughtful things in public or face-to-face with someone will say absolutely hideous things here in these realms. All one can do is try to ignore that and rise above it. Frankly though, in my opinion, this site is heavenly compared to much of the rest of what is out there in Internetland. And partly, the criticism of Danny's doings is simply well-directed and appropriate.

That leaves the ambiguous and the unknown as sources of criticism. The only way to solve that is to get the facts out. He who has an ear, let him hear.

I should also note that I have responded to a wide variety of Danny's statements below. I do not mean that everything I say something about is earthshaking. Some things are trivial, some are profound. Probably I will miss something that others see as significant, too. My apologies; pick up the slack for me if you will. All I can say is, this is what caught my eye and what I responded to. I believe the implied intent in sending this to me was that I react to it. I have done so.

So here's the material

Part 1, e-mail message as received –

[Note: Inter-paragraphic line spacing added for clarity. In all other regards, this is identical to what I received.]

From: "Danny Shelton" <danshelton@earthlink.net>
Date: Tue, 26 Oct 2004 16:11:18 -0500
To: [NormF@...](#) (Link: <mailto:NormF@...>)

Subject: [none]

Hi Norm.

My name is Danny Shelton. Someone sent me some statements from Linda's interview. I'm not sure but it looks like you are the one who said that Danny has made public statements about divorcing Linda over spiritual adultery. If you are the one who made these statements, could you show me some evidence in writing where I have made that kind of statement. If you are not the one who made the statement, do you know who is as I would like to have someone show me that I have made a public statement that I divorced Linda over spiritual adultery.

Though I petitioned for the divorce through Guam at a later date, Linda first hired an attorney in Benton Illinois by the name of John Drew to draw up divorce papers to serve to me. I didn't talk to her lawyer, but this is what she said. I have no reason to doubt her, because we talked about it a number of times. I asked her how she could divorce me and on what grounds, since she is the one who had a boyfriend that she had been vacationing with privately and was making more plans which have since been executed to vacation in Europe and here in the States together. They have spent six to seven weeks together on vacation in the last 3 months or so. Two of the vacations were in Europe.

Anyway, I didn't want to get a divorce here in our county as I knew the newspapers would carry the story since we are public figures. We checked into going to Las Vegas where a couple can get a divorce in 6 weeks. Linda said she would go and be the petitioner and she was going to be the petitioner here in Franklin County anyway, but that she wanted me to pay her \$7000 to go to Vegas for six weeks to get this accomplished. I was going to do that even though I couldn't afford it, but with the help of a local attorney, we got help for us to get the divorce in Guam as it is a US territory. It only cost about \$1500 and could be done in about 2 weeks. Since I wasn't paying her she said that getting the divorce through Guam was ok but that I would have to be the petitioner. Some of her friends told her that it would look much better on her later on if she made me be the petitioner even though it was a mutually consented divorce.

You can post this if you want, but I have not publicly said that I divorced Linda for spiritual adultery. It's much deeper than that. I understand that's what she and Johann T letter says, but there is a great amount of fiction in both her web sight as well as Johann's letter. If one figures that she's spent nearly five weeks in Europe with this man and he has been to Springfield at least 3 times and Linda has been to Las Vegas inbetween, How does she say she has been tucked away in the woods of Southern Illinois. I didn't want and still don't want certain parts of our personal lives to be public but Linda's letters to the public as well as Johann T. put me in a position of answering that charge. Otherwise I'm sure my board would have removed me from my position had I divorced Linda for no biblical reason. I will not share publicly what my proof is. Mine and Linda's life though very public, still have a right to a certain amount of privacy.

All I will say is that if a married woman is not emotionally and physically involved with a man of the opposite sex beyond what is acceptable to her husband and a group of Christian counselors and church leaders, it seems she would stop this relationship in order to save her marriage and ministry. Linda was asked many times by myself and my board Chairman Dr. Walt Thompson, and the Thompsonville church pastor, John Lomacang, as well as Mark Finley to give this relationship up in order to save her marriage and ministry. She has always, and still refuses.

I have told her many times that if she will drop this man that I can forgive her and we could start restoration of our marriage and ministry. She will not.

Danny

Part 2, e-mail message interleaved with my responses –

Hi Norm.

My name is Danny Shelton.

A newbie-ism: This sentence is superfluous. It should have been left out. The header always identifies the sender already, much the same as a memo header does or that the return address on an envelope does. You appear to be learning the ropes though, as this does not appear on later messages I have seen from you.

Someone sent me some statements from Linda's interview.

This sentence is disingenuous, and not good Netiquette. Don't drag other unknown persons into the discussion needlessly. It's both a newbie-ism and inappropriate to any fair and reasoned discussion. Either simply tell me who told you this outright, or say "I see that you wrote ...", or "According to your post titled 'xyz' on 'date123', you say ...", if you prefer to not divulge that. If you choose one of the latter two methods, be sure you get your facts of attribution correct. In other words, be sure XYZ really did say that, or that you know specifically where you saw where I said the statement you're responding to. If nothing else, it avoids egg on your face.

This is why posters make such active use of quotes. Same with reporters. And it should be noted that when you respond to a poster, either on-site or in an e-mail cleared for posting, like you've done here, you are in essence talking to the reporter's readers, that is to say, the general public. The only difference is that there's no reporter go-between in this case. You've gone straight to the bottom line.

More than this, there's no shame in reading through discussion topics on an Internet forum for yourself. It makes good sense. And don't let labels like "lurker" embarrass you away; that's nothing more than Net lingo. It's not a putdown. Just like you've requested of others seeking information on you and 3ABN, it makes good sense to go to the source yourself to get your information.

I'm not sure but it looks like you are the one who said that Danny has made public statements about divorcing Linda over spiritual adultery.

If I were the only one who'd said anything about this subject, and it weren't entirely clear what I'd actually said, this would be a fair statement.

The fact is that a string of posts went back and forth over the subject of "spiritual adultery", and I was just one of many. My comment came well down the way chronologically, and in a separate thread from that long discussion. What I said

summarized the conclusions of that discussion, while simultaneously reflecting my own take on it.

If you are the one who made these statements, could you show me some evidence in writing where I have made that kind of statement[?] [sic]

(This sentence is a question, despite it's lack of a question mark for punctuation at its end.)

See first my comment on the previous sentence.

In reality, you are making a charge that I am the one who originated and instigated this line of discussion. Based then on that assumption, you're trying to require me to show proof that you had made such a claim in the course of filing for divorce. My response is this: First, what you're doing in questioning me this way is merely diversionary, and only serves to muddy the water around the matter.

Second, actually, there is no call for me to defend myself against your charge. Instead, you are the one who should be establishing, for all to know, where the truth as you see it lies and that you did not make such a statement, if that's what you believe to be the case.

And for the record: I am miles from being that originator. According to the line of dated public discussion on CA, Kay Kuzma (a defacto, if not outright, employee of yours, and therefore to be reasonably supposed as being a spokesperson for you) is the one who most likely originally floated that notion publicly as being a valid basis for your divorce long before I picked up on it and made any comments about it. Certainly, her statement seems to be what originally got that discussion thread underway here.

If you are not the one who made the statement, do you know who is[,] as I would like to have someone show me that I have made a public statement that I divorced Linda over spiritual adultery[?] [sic]

(This sentence too is a question, despite it's lack of a question mark for punctuation at its end.)

I'm not "on trial" here nor responsible for defending myself against this question either; again you're being disingenuous. Rather, you are the one responsible for disproving the notion of "spiritual adultery", of whether or not it is valid and apropos to your circumstances, and if not so then what.

If you did say it and now have changed your mind, say so ... publicly. Likewise, if you told Dr. Kuzma to say it for you and now you've changed your mind, say so ... publicly. If you never said it, or your words were misconstrued, say so, and show the facts to prove it ... publicly.

And let me point out, that if it's the latter of the three, you are obliged to show not only what your true position is, but also how the current status of public opinion arrived at its

errant position, that is, if you intend to achieve a successful rebuttal of the error. Less than that equivocates into finger pointing and a he-said/she-said argument.

Though I petitioned for the divorce through Guam at a later date, Linda first hired an attorney in Benton[,] Illinois[,] by the name of John Drew to draw up divorce papers to serve to me. I didn't talk to her lawyer, but this is what she said. I have no reason to doubt her, because we talked about it a number of times.


"... we talked about it a number of times"

This is one of the real questions on people's minds, Danny. Which one of you was the one to instigate the thing and announce to the other, "I want a divorce"? The sequence and conclusion of legal machinations is immaterial. Nobody with any depth of understanding much cares whether it was your name or hers on the application itself as petitioner for divorce.

What counts is, are you the one who started it and said, "the only solution to this problem is divorce -- I want a divorce"? Or was Linda?

The resulting public statements since then of both of you point really strongly at you.

The question matters because the moral reason for divorce is at the very crux of the whole thing, at least among the Adventist public ... and to a greater or lesser degree, it is to the world at large, too.

 I asked her how she could divorce me and on what grounds, since she is the one who had a boyfriend that she had been vacationing with privately and was making more plans[,] which have since been executed[,] to vacation in Europe and here in the States together. They have spent six to seven weeks together on vacation in the last 3 months or so. Two of the vacations were in Europe.

Obviously, with the second half of this paragraph, you do finally recognize the importance of moral justification for your deed, because here you start defending yourself.

But, Danny, what a weak defense.

"Boyfriend" and "vacations together"? That's mere name-calling and speculation at best. And at their worst -- developing a friendship with someone and spending time together, they still don't constitute physical adultery. Why don't you use more nearly neutral terminology? Using such heavily loaded wording without simultaneously giving the basis for doing so, is usually bluff and bluster. Only physical adultery = physical adultery.

If you do have proof that Linda committed adultery with another person -- either with Linda's own confession or with other incontrovertible evidence -- then say so! And I hope in heaven's name that you didn't and aren't resorting to Watergate-style immorality to obtain proof, under the horrendous notion that the end justifies the means. If you do have the proof (honorably obtained!), you're right that you don't have to wallow in the

mire about it or hang out your dirty laundry for all the world to see. But you cannot justify your actions to those who have a fundamentalist understanding about God and Christianity with anything less than a clear, unequivocal statement, "I divorced her on biblical grounds."

And may I add, you needed the proof prior to the filing of the divorce suit. Seeking for the proof after the fact, as the grapevine is suggesting presently, is way out of line -- clear off the deep end.

You will then have to prove to accepted authorities that your accusations are true -- your board of directors, plus profoundly respected authorities in the church, maybe certain others, etc. (And I emphasize the importance of that qualifier: "profoundly respected." They must be people that have earned that respect across the broad range of public perception.) You cannot hide the facts from them. But even here you need not make the mud and mire public. Once you've proved to them in private that you are right, it is their obligation in turn to defend your honor to the public, without embarrassing either you or Linda. But you (and they) cannot skip this step.

On the other hand, the question of what was being done during those long periods together does have some relevance. I'm quite willing to admit that, and so are most other honest, thinking persons. If that wasn't time spent clearly above board, it was a problem. From the public's point of view, what that means is that either you need to prove Linda was misbehaving or Linda needs to prove she was being good. (I'm using the word "prove" casually here, but I think we both know what I mean.) Neither of you have done that yet. As far as I can tell, neither of you has even tried to either. Not good

Were it not for the historical fact of the divorce, and there really was misbehavior that had gone on short of adultery, that should have been reason merely for (serious) private work between you two to clear up a marital problem. No one would or should have even known about it. Hard to deal with, but doable nevertheless. As it is now, it's that plus the problem of dealing with the publicly seen rancor over it if a reconciliation is ever to be effected. And if there is no basis in fact for the accusation, the possibility for reconciliation becomes remote.

If in fact, the smoking gun really is in there, get it out and prove it. Not in detail and salaciously, but say so and prove it, as I just outlined above.

By and large, you (I believe) and most Adventists are very much fundamentalist in your thinking on matters of morality. That leaves you no wiggle room.

If you are the one who initiated the divorce, either Linda committed physical adultery and you are entitled to legal relief and redress; or she didn't, and you can't. Under your own terms, you can't morally have a divorce without that. Nothing else, nothing less. Period.

Anyway, I didn't want to get a divorce here in our county[,] as I knew the newspapers would carry the story[,] since we are public figures. We checked into going to Las Vegas[,] where a couple can get a divorce in 6 weeks. Linda said she would go and be the petitioner[,] and she was going to be the petitioner here in Franklin County anyway, but that she wanted me to pay her \$7000 to go to Vegas for six weeks to get this accomplished. I was going to do that[,] even though I couldn't afford it, but with the help of a local attorney, we got help for us to get the

divorce in Guam[,] as it is a US territory. It only cost about \$1500 and could be done in about 2 weeks. Since I wasn't paying her[,] she said that getting the divorce through Guam was ok[,] but that I would have to be the petitioner. Some of her friends told her that it would look much better on her[,] later on[,] if she made me be the petitioner[,] even though it was a mutually consented divorce.

Your statement in this paragraph needs some clarification. Up till now, the public's understanding has been that the suit was filed as what is legally termed "an uncontested divorce", or in most jurisdictions, a "no-fault divorce." This means that certain redress options available under law are not being sought by the petitioner. I don't know the status of Illinois law per se, but I do know that in today's legal environment, you have to go out of your way in most parts of the country to even find the availability of a contested divorce suit anymore. The new wording you are using here, however, suggests that the two of you have a private compact between yourselves, behind what you have done in filing for divorce. In that compact, you both agree that since there is enough guilt on both sides, neither of you would opt to try for the sorts of redress that might result from the settlement of a contested divorce.

From a moral point of view, this kind of statement by two fundamentalist Adventists (and I emphasize this aspect of the matter strongly) can put a whole new spin on it. If this is true, then you and Linda both have a lot of explaining to do -- A) to provide enough of the facts to establish that a divorce is still morally called for, B) both of you together are going to have to show to the public that you do indeed agree upon this interpretation of what you've jointly done, and C) together both of you are going to have to give a consistent explanation for why you haven't done this until now. It means, Danny, stated in plain, explicit terms, that you are saying that both of you have committed physical adultery, which means now you will have to confess to that too, right along with her. Ouch!

Are you sure you want to go down this road?

I wouldn't want to unless the facts are so indisputable that I had no choice.

Of course, perhaps you are just not being careful with your words. After all, we all know that there's lots of blame to go around in every transaction between two people, regardless of how good or bad the transaction may be and how the balance between the two of them weighs out. Beyond this statement here in this e-mail and a couple recent ones like it, there is nothing I know of to suggest this might be true. So I have to think you're simply making a very poor word choice this time and not being very careful to state clearly what you mean.

Since you are operating in the public arena, whether you like it or not, you must be careful with your words if you want to avoid being misunderstood.

You can post this if you want, but I have not publicly said that I divorced Linda for spiritual adultery. It's much deeper than that.

What do you mean by this: "... much deeper than that"? If physical, biblical adultery isn't on the table, and if creative theology is not an acceptable alternative, what then is this? To me, this sounds like the opening of yet another can of worms. Assertions like this set

off alarm bells that trouble me all the worse.

I keep saying, it takes two to tango, to marry ... and to divorce. It's never sweet and simple, both sides contribute immensely to each dance. I certainly concede that. Maybe that's what you mean. But somehow it doesn't hit me that that's what you mean. Say it isn't so, or please clarify it.

I understand that's what she [sic] and [the] Johann T letter says [sic], but there is a great amount of fiction in both her web sight [sic] as well as Johann[']s letter.

In the public arena, such an unsupported accusation ("a great amount of fiction") is inadequate. Since you are a public figure, you must accept that fact and deal with it. You don't need to reveal all the sorry details here either, but you are going to have to reveal enough to establish the validity of your charge of fiction.

Here again, you are putting yourself in an ethical quandary. Does the value of making such a statement valid to the public establish enough to make it worthwhile delving into stuff you've previously felt you wanted to keep quiet? If you do go public with it to achieve that, where does it all end?

Only you can give the answer to that. And whatever answer you give is going to show the true quality of the fruit you produce.

If one figures that she's spent nearly five weeks in Europe with this man and he has been to Springfield at least 3 times and Linda has been to Las Vegas inbetween [sic], [h]ow does she say she has been tucked away in the woods of Southern Illinois[?] I didn't want[,] and still don't want[,] certain parts of our personal lives to be public[;] but Linda's letters to the public[,] as well as Johann T[']s[,] put me in a position of answering that charge.

If you're right, you probably should make some sort of a public response. What form that response takes should be very carefully considered. It may be that a point-by-point rebuttal of Linda's letters and Johann's statements is called for. Or it may be that some other course is more appropriate, something less belligerent and bruising.

If on consideration, you decide that nothing is called for, should you be making any statements at all like this, with the resulting derivatives that flow from them?

Otherwise I'm sure my board would have removed me from my position had I divorced Linda for no biblical reason.

In a world where things work the way they're supposed to, this would be true. Most of us realize though, that like the Walgreen Drug Store commercial on TV, there's the perfect world and then there's something less.

Let us hope for your sake that this is true and that the 3ABN Board has acted

appropriately. But in a world of Enron's, Global Crossing's, Tyco's, Swaggart's, the Baker's, and so many others, it's hard to believe that. Time will tell.

I will not share publicly what my proof is. Mine [sic] and Linda's life[,] though very public, still have [sic] a right to a certain amount of privacy.

I concur, as noted above.

All I will say is that if a married woman is not [sic] emotionally and physically involved with a man of the opposite sex beyond what is acceptable [sic] to her husband and a group of Christian counselors and church leaders, it seems she would stop this relationship ...

That is true. In a good marriage, she could and probably would change her behavior to ways that might smooth a piece of rocky road in your journey that you believe is causing you great pain. But not because there is the threat of divorce hanging over her head. Neither you nor counselors nor church leaders nor anyone else has the right to do that. That cannot be the correct reason why she should have changed her behavior in this regard. Again, let me repeat, first, without physical adultery, divorce is not an option; and second, certainly neither it nor any other sorts of things that might yield threats are ever validly available to be used as a tool against a spouse. In a properly functioning marital relationship, "tools" such as this simply cannot to be used against one another. People alter their behaviors in a properly functioning marriage because they value the common bonds between them; and they are willing to change, even when they are in the right, in order to be of help to their hurting spouses, because their relationship means so much to them, not because their spouse or some other external authority figure is threatening them.

... in order to save her marriage and ministry. Linda was asked many times by myself and my {B}oard Chairman Dr. Walt Thompson, and the Thompsonville church pastor, John Lomacang, as well as Mark Finley[,] to give this relationship up in order to save her marriage and ministry. She has always, and still[,] refuses.

According to what Linda is saying publicly, not only has she not committed physical adultery, she has not done things that can rightly be interpreted as an attack on the value and viability of a properly functioning marital relationship. Her claim, as I hear it, is only that she was doing what she thought was right to help her child in danger, not that she was trying to destroy your marriage.

If she's right, the two of you had a problem that needed serious joint work, not a divorce. She and you both needed to recognize you were facing big problems assaulting the second-most important relationship of your lives, the first one after what exists between you and God. Give-and-take on both sides, and long hard effort by both of you together were desperately called for. Given what we know to date, she needed to take into account your seemingly overly sensitized feelings about her interactions with others, and you needed to take into account her feelings about the importance of dealing with

her child's problems. That hasn't happened ... yet. Is there more to factor in here? I don't know. None of us outside your (plural) inner circles knows -- maybe yes, maybe no; maybe heavier, maybe lighter.

Couples cannot a build a building, a building on which only the two of you are allowed to do the actual construction, if you two cannot coordinate your efforts and work together. A marital relationship is that kind of a unique building. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

I have told her many times that if she will drop this man[,] th[en] I can forgive her[;] and we could start restoration of our marriage and ministry. She will not.

These two sentences are the crux of the Shelton's rock and hard place as I see it. If you can yield and budge from your position and if she can soften from hers, enough to begin finding room to maneuver and open up some channels of real communication between you, where both of you hear and are heard, there is yet hope for a relationship. After nearly 20 years of work on it, there must have been some fine parts to that building. Maybe that can be restored. Like the physician's stance -- "where there's life, there's hope" -- an outside chance remains here.

But by now, it's a badly gutted and bombed-out shell. What little is left is slipping away fast. Every day rushes closer to the point of no return.

Danny

Danny Shelton

danshelton@... (Link: <mailto:danshelton@...>)

Why Wait? Move to EarthLink.

Danny, let me add a postscript here, something that should be said but wasn't brought up specifically in your e-mail to me. It appears that there may be some movement in what some describe as your "life commandments", the inner guidelines that a person uses as they relate to life and the world around them. These are not to be confused with Biblical doctrines, specifically the Ten Commandments and its derivatives. Some life commandments are as simple as "clean up your plate" ... and so now you do, even if it causes you to battle your waistline today. (Hypothetical example only, don't take me wrong) Some are a good deal more complex. Seldom do they change as we go through life. But on the other hand, life is a journey, and things do change sometimes. These life commandments, combined with the natural frame of mind we were born with, work into the structure of the paradigms we use to meet life -- our personal philosophy of life. Part of that, the part that's significant to my discussion here, works out in our take on things spiritual. For example, most Adventists have a fundamentalist approach to religion, that's one of their commonalities that draws them together. Fundamentalism, and indeed even religion, are not, however, ends in themselves. They are merely some of the tools

we use in how we relate to God and to our spiritual natures and needs. Other approaches besides fundamentalism, however, are equally legitimate.

Fundamentalism doesn't allow for any other alternatives to physical adultery as a reason for divorce. Less rigid approaches do. If you decide that fundamentalism is too rigid for you, you are certainly entitled to do so. And you are in good company if you do, biblical company. The key is whether you are being consistent with what you truly believe. This was what Paul was talking about in Roman 14:23, "... everything that does not come from faith is sin", which is to say that conversely, if it does come from faith, from what you truly believe, it is not sin. This is not to negate absolute values; they are what they are and remain unchanged and unchangeable. But how they apply to you in an imperfect world is not so severely nailed down. Fundamentalism, being what it is, has a hard time dealing with this truth; but nevertheless, it's there.

As your internal paradigm shifts, alternatives open up to you, legitimate alternatives if you remain honest to yourself and God. The problem comes then in trying to explain that to those who remain in the rigid, unbending camp. Once you move away from the fixed unyielding position, others elsewhere are tolerant and understanding of you. But not those from whence you came. It is well nigh impossible to get them to see any sort of alternatives ever, much less accept it as reasonable and proper. Their paradigm won't let them.

Perhaps you are moving in that direction, perhaps not. I'm not sure yet. There are signals in what you say that this may be so. If you are, you see and understand what I'm pointing out, and it grows clearer to you why you feel the way you do as you continue on your journey. If you aren't, you are left with uncompromising black-and-whites and only one track -- and it starts with the belief that the only acceptable reason for divorce is physical adultery.

You may have noticed that I used the word "fundamentalism" repeatedly in my comments within your e-mail above. This discussion here in this postscript is why. With its near universality among Adventists, you have a long row to hoe in terms of obtaining broad acceptance among this camp if you decide to move toward other paradigms and other choices in your life. Please note that I did not say good versus bad choices, but other choices.

As you work to sort out this issue for yourself, I wish you well. Follow Paul's guidance; keep consistent with your innermost core of belief. "Keep the faith." Just remember also that as a public figure, not only are you responsible to God and yourself, but to the public clamors for your reasoning, too. And to a greater or lesser degree, rightfully so.