



# Three Angels Broadcasting Responds to Schwisow

By Walter Thompson

The story by Edwin Schwisow regarding Linda Shelton's recent termination from Three Angels Broadcasting contains a number of basic factual inaccuracies. Even more troubling, given that Adventist Today holds itself out as a Christian, Adventist publication, is the highly misleading slant the article gives to the events by its reliance on "reports" and "sources" from only one side of the matter. It seems that no one currently from Three Angels was spoken to regarding the claims of this story prior to its being sent to the printer.

As chairman of the board, I was involved with this matter early on, and led the independent fact-finding committee that investigated it. We sought intensely for reconciliation, but ultimately we were forced to recommend the termination of Mrs. Shelton from Three Angels. I list below the most troubling aspects of Mr. Schwisow's story.

1

The story of Danny and Linda's separation and divorce is a deeply personal, very sad event that has caused deep pain to all involved. To characterize the event as a "move that consolidates Danny Shelton at Three Angels helm" and as a sort of "coup", as the article claims, is untrue and even offensive to those of us involved in the decision. For the president of a religious ministry to engineer or pursue a divorce to enhance his standing or position at the ministry would be very foolish. Such an extraordinary claim would require extraordinary evidence to support it. Your author has not even ordinary evidence to support it, but is merely engaged in a cynical kind of speculation.

Danny is still the president of Three Angels, and has the full confidence of the board. But these events have caused Three Angels leadership to recognize that Danny needs greater assistance and support in carrying out that role, and the board chairman and others have become more involved in oversight activities. One example is a recently appointed manager of operations to assist Danny in his responsibilities.

2

Mr. Schwisow's attempts to support his "theory" of the meaning of the events at Three Angels by a number of references to claims made by "sources close to Linda Shelton". While he would no doubt deny that he is according these claims the status of "facts", he uses them as though they were. To print and repeat allegations from one side of the story, without acknowledging the views and claims presented by the other side, is to accord the former an unchallenged and privileged status usually accorded only to verified facts.

Anyone who considers the recent events at Three Angels as a "coup" or a "coup-in-the-works" is sadly misinformed and ignorant of the multiple efforts made over several months by Christian leaders to bring reconciliation to both Danny and Linda and to Linda and Three Angels. The list includes Danny and Linda's local pastor; meetings with professional Christian counselors; meetings with myself as board chairman; a review of the facts and further meetings and attempts at reconciliation by an investigative committee made up of Bill Hulse, an Adventist layman and mayor of Collegedale; Dr. Kay Kuzma, Adventist family expert and author; Nicholas Miller, an Adventist attorney from a national law firm; and myself. Only after multiple efforts by these persons to achieve reconciliation failed was the matter reluctantly taken to the board for final resolution. This sequence of events is no secret. Three Angels described these efforts to its supporters in a letter sent out earlier last summer. Since then, Pastor Mark Finley has made further attempts at reconciliation, all to no avail.

3

Likewise, the printing of claims regarding Linda's relationship with the Norwegian physician to be solely about her son's treatment is to promote a story which the facts do not support. Without going into detail, we have solid evidence that, prior to her divorce and termination, Linda spent considerable time with this physician, both on the telephone and in person, in a manner inappropriate for a leader of a Christian ministry, or for any married woman for that matter. These contacts, inappropriate in their length, subject matter, and subterfuge, continued despite requests by both Danny and other Three Angels leadership that they cease. It is also clear, even by Linda's own admission, that the vast majority of these interactions had nothing to do with medical treatments for her son. In the short time since her divorce, Linda has traveled to Europe twice for nearly five weeks to spend time with this physician. These recent trips, which were taken without her son, have caused many of Linda's formerly die-hard supporters to recognize the truth of the matter of Linda's inappropriate relationship, and to cease their efforts in defending her.

4

The claim that Melody Shelton has begun to regularly appear as co-host is untrue. Melody sings from time to time on Three Angels, but has never co-hosted a program, and tries to avoid public speaking. The truth is that a variety of people have been assisting Danny with hosting responsibilities, and even hosting programs on their own. Of necessity, others are playing roles that Linda has played at Three Angels, but no one has "replaced" Linda. It is doubtful in my opinion that anyone ever will or can replace her unique combination of gifts.

5

Mr. Schwisow cannot seem to decide if the Shelton's unfortunate split is an effort calculated to revive a flagging ministry, as he suggests in paragraph 11, or a grave disruption that will harm Three Angels' prospects over the coming year, as in paragraph 12. Fortunately, neither theory or projection is true. These unfortunate events, which have been strongly resisted rather than cultivated, have caused both the leadership and supporters of Three Angels to draw together in prayer and support for the ministry. We have chosen to view these events with the eye of faith, looking for the opportunity the Lord always brings at a time of crisis. Due to this, Three Angels has significantly expanded, nearly doubled, its potential viewers, and financial support is well ahead of where it was last year at this time. Your author's prediction of a "less-than-banner-year", whether he meant number of viewers or financial support, is not supported by the facts.

In my view, this article is far from being simple news story that recites the facts in a fair and balanced fashion. Rather, it is a story with an agenda. I am not opposed to a story with an agenda, when it is not presented as a news story, when there has been a careful review of both sides of the matter, and where the author is quite certain of his or her facts. Such is not the case here. Rather, a few facts have been mixed in with a number of allegations from one side of the story, and then it has been stirred together with an anti-Danny Shelton, anti-Three Angels slant.

I am in favor of a church of greater openness. Events, good and bad, at times need to be aired and reported on. But it is an axiom of Christian charity that we should seek to put the most reasonably positive construction on events rather than the most negative. Mr. Schwisow's story fails on this most fundamental and elemental of tests. We hope that Adventist Today will hold future stories regarding Three Angels and other Christian ministries and leaders to a higher standard.

Walter Thompson, M.D., Chairman of the Board

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