

Spring 2010

Eldrick & Elin (with apologies to Anni-Frid, Björn, Benny, and Agnetha)

By David A. Kenny

We are especially fortunate to have been able to interview Eldrick (aka Tiger) Tont Woods and Elin Woods. Elin is a psychology major at Rollins College in Winter Park Florida USA, and this interview was done to complete her course assignment on personal growth. As we shall see, Tiger too has been learning about relationship science to help him better understand his situation. The interviewer asked to remain anonymous, but it can be disclosed that he has a high golf handicap and is one- eighth Swedish.

Interviewer: Let me get right to it. Tiger, why is that you were unfaithful?

Tiger: Evolutionary psychologists say that all men are addicted to sex. However, I have recently learned about priming from cognitive psychology and I think it was all but inevitable that being a golf pro would lead to sexual adventures. With all the references to “stiff shafts,” “washing of balls,” “playing in threesomes and foursomes,” and “playing a round,” unconscious messages were being given to me to cheat. I am the victim of unconscious priming.

Interviewer: Elin, I ask you the same question. Why do you think Tiger was unfaithful to you?

Elin: I think it is all due to Buddhism, which he has learned from his mother, Lula. People think of Buddhism in terms of reincarnation, “life as a journey,” and other such things. But what Buddhism really teaches is to be free of attachments. They do not believe that attachments can or should ever be “secure.” Tiger learned that lesson all too well.

Interviewer: I think the one question that we all want to ask you, Tiger, is how can you manage to simultaneously maintain relationships with as many as 12 different women, one being Elin? Most of us men struggle to find the time or energy to deal with just one woman.

Tiger: I think I am even better at women management than I am at golf course management. I worked as hard on learning how to surreptitiously send text messages as I did on how to make a 50 foot putt. It is also not easy keeping all their names straight. There was Rachel, Kalika, Theresa, Jamie, Holly, Jamie, Mindy, Joslyn, Cori, Julie, and Loredana. Fortunately, from my introductory psychology class at Stanford, I learned about mnemonics and I memorized their names by using one: Robert Kennedy, T. J. Hooker, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Jimmy Clift, and Ludicris. I am also negotiating with Apple for a new “app” for the iPhone which manages text messaging from

multiple partners. It is called “Sexting.”

Interviewer: Elin, your mother was married twice, your parents were divorced, Tiger’s father was twice married, and his parents lived apart for several years. How do you think that each of your experiences with parental marital difficulties have influenced you?

Elin: Yeah I know that the research of Mavis Hetherington on children of divorce is pretty depressing, but I also know that a meta-analysis by Amato and Keith does show relatively small effect sizes. For me, my parents’ divorce made me want to work even harder on my marriage. I think Tiger was more affected by his green-beret father’s infidelity than the separation. He kept saying he did not want to end up like Michael Jackson who was bothered by his father Joe Jackson’s numerous affairs. I guess he did accomplish that goal.

Interviewer: Tiger, you are incredibly ethnically diverse. You are, I believe, one-quarter African-American, one-quarter Chinese, one-quarter Thai, one-eighth American Indian, and one-eighth Dutch. Does your ethnic diversity help you better understand your difficult situation?

Tiger: Yeah, I am more Asian than Black and I joke around with K. J. Choi of Korea that I am the best Asian golfer ever. I really should be described as Tiger Woods, Chinese golfer, as both my parents are part Chinese. Of course, being one-

quarter Chinese did not help me much when I tried to back my Cadillac Escalade out my driveway that November night.

Interviewer: Elin, do you think Tiger’s ethnic diversity is an asset?

Elin: Maybe, but I worry more about the issue of generational incompatibility. Although we are both Capricorns, I am an 80s person, born on January 1, 1980. Tiger is a 70s guy. The one thing we did have in common during our courtship was our love of the Swedish singing group Abba. My pet name for him was Fernando and he called me his Dancing Queen. Now I keep thinking of the Abba lyric from Just Like That: “He made a temporary home in my flat, telling innocent lies, blowing dust in my eyes.”

Tiger: And I keep thinking of S.O.S. and “When you’re gone, though I try how can I carry on?”

Elin: And I think of “Knowing me and knowing you” and “Silence ever after, walking through an empty house, tears in my eyes. Here is where the story ends, this is goodbye.”

Interviewer: I can only say “Mamma mia!” I guess Maybe it is fitting that we ended with Abba, the group with two married couples, who divorced and tried to continue working together, but could not. I want to thank you both for taking the time to share with us your personal reactions during this most difficult time. Both the readers of

this newsletter and I sincerely wish
you and your two children, Sam and
Charlie our best.