

[00:00:00] **Music:** “Oh No, Ross and Carrie! Theme Song” by Brian Keith Dalton. A jaunty, upbeat instrumental.

[00:00:08] **Ross Blocher:** Hello and welcome to *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!*, the show where we don't just report on fringe science, spirituality, and claims of the paranormal. No, no, no. We take part ourselves. When they make the claims, we show up, so you don't have to. I know Carrie's not here today, but I do have an exciting guest today: Dan Phelps. This will also be a revisit to our Ark Encounter series, and we'd often mention while talking about the Ark Encounter that there are a lot of interesting behind the scenes stories. And who better to tell us about them than Dan Phelps?

Dan is a Kentucky geologist who is the founder and president of the Kentucky Paleontological Society. And he's been on the front lines since the '80s, trying to fight creationism in his state. And he's been closely following the career of Ken Ham and the organization Answers in Genesis. He's written letters to the editor. He's put in requests for public records. He's shared those documents widely, he's written numerous blog posts, he's written reviews of both the Creation Museum and the Ark Encounter—both of which he attended for the National Center for Science Education. And they honored him with the Friend of Darwin Award for his many efforts in this fight. He's also featured in the 2019 PBS documentary *We Believe in Dinosaurs*. And much more to say about Dan Phelps.

But let's hear it from Dan himself. I'll mention this is a conversation over Zoom, so there may be a few moments where you miss a little part of a word or sentence from Dan, but hopefully everything's kind of there in context. But without further ado. Dan Phelps, welcome to *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!*.

[00:01:52] **Dan Phelps:** Well, thank you so much. I appreciate being here.

[00:01:54] **Ross Blocher:** You've been on the beat of both Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum for a long time. Well, first of all, just tell us a little bit about how you came to be involved in the Kentucky Paleontological Society, and what makes you excited about science, before I ask you about pseudoscience.

[00:02:15] **Dan Phelps:** Oh, the good stuff! I'm glad somebody asked me about that instead of the stupid ark part of the Creation Museum.

[00:02:19] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, we'll get there!

[00:02:21] **Dan Phelps:** Well, I've always been interested in paleontology and fossils, and I majored in geology at the University of Kentucky and eventually got a master's degree there. It's hard to find work in any sort of paleontology field, so I ended up a petroleum geologist at a major oil company and eventually moved back to Kentucky and worked for environmental protection for a number of years. So, I'm now retired from state government. I'm in my early 60s now. And about 30 years ago, I started the Kentucky Paleontological Society. It's a group of both professional and amateur paleontologists—everything from people with PhDs to people with hardly any science background at all that are interested in fossils and paleontology.

[00:03:01] **Ross Blocher:** Fantastic!

[00:03:02] **Dan Phelps:** And we have monthly field trips and monthly speakers.

[00:03:05] **Ross Blocher:** So, you were doing this long before Ken Ham shadowed the doorway of Kentucky.

[00:03:10] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, well I came back to Kentucky about the same time that Ken Ham showed up here.

[00:03:16] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, was that—what? 1994, I think, he moved out?

[00:03:18] **Dan Phelps:** 1993. I had always been against creationism here in Kentucky. And in fact, I got started in my anti-creationist stuff way back as pretty much a freshman to sophomore level student as an undergraduate. That was like 1980 and 1981. We had (*inaudible*) in Kentucky, in Lexington at least, to teach creationism in the local schools. And this caused a lot of big controversy here. The school board was divided—two for and two against creationism with one undecided. And Eugenie Scott, I was actually taking her physical anthropology class at the University of Kentucky at the time, and I got involved in helping out with writing letters to the editor and showing up at school board meetings and stuff like that.

[00:04:04] **Ross Blocher:** Excellent. Long time listeners to our podcast may remember an interview Carrie and I had with Eugenie Scott quite a few years ago.

[00:04:11] **Dan Phelps:** Oh, wonderful.

[00:04:13] **Ross Blocher:** And she was involved for many years with the National Center for Science Education. And I noticed that they awarded you as Friend of Darwin in 2017.

[00:04:21] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, that's right. I've been doing this for a long time in addition to my actual science work.

[00:04:27] **Ross Blocher:** Fantastic. And again, just thinking of science in Kentucky, what makes Kentucky a great state for a geologist? What kind of fossils can you find there? What kind of evidence of the past?

[00:04:39] **Dan Phelps:** Oh, we have a wonderful Paleozoic section of rocks. We have mainly Ordovician rocks here in central Kentucky. Outer Blue Grass contains things like the Falls of the Ohio Devonian fossil beds. And our coalfields are—well, our Mississippian rocks are full of nice fossils as well. And our coalfields have all sorts of spectacular plant fossils. So, we're actually in a pretty good spot. The states to the north of us have been glaciated, and you have to pretty much find a quarry or a special road cut. Here in Kentucky, we have road cuts all over the place, quarries all over the place, railroad cuts, all these different exposures where you can collect fossils very easily.

[00:05:17] **Ross Blocher:** Fantastic. So, Kentucky is a great place to do science, and here you were just doing that, and the creationists had to come make this their battleground.

(Dan laughs.)

Now, what do you think it was about Kentucky that really drew Ken Ham and other creationists to the state?

[00:05:34] **Dan Phelps:** Oh, there's several different factors. I would say one of them is we have a large fundamentalist to evangelical population. Second, we have all sorts of wonderful tax breaks towards religious organizations, so they can run side businesses and not be taxed for a lot of the stuff that they do, or at least have low taxes at the very minimum. And of course, Ken Ham claims he came to Kentucky because it was within like a day's drive of so much, like 2/3rds of the population of the eastern US. But I've always found that argument a little bit BS, because there's a lot of places that are within 2/3rds of the population.

(Ross affirms and they chuckle.)

But I think he had lots of friendly politicians and churches and stuff here. That's the reason he showed up here.

[00:06:21] **Ross Blocher:** Well, as we were doing our unpacking of the Ark Encounter and the Creation Museum—we've also been talking about that as well—we kept promising that we would, at some point, do sort of a deep dive on all of those tax incentives, government breaks that Ken Ham and the Answers in Genesis organization used build both the Creation Museum and the Ark Encounter. And so, we're really excited about you providing some of that context today. So, yeah, tell me a bit about sort of how you got involved in this battle against creationism and what Ken Ham's been doing in the state.

[00:06:59] **Dan Phelps:** Well, of course, I started out in the early '80s, like I said, at some of the school board meetings and stuff like that. But it really sort of subsided, other than the occasional letters that I'd heard and stuff like that over the years. But then, Ken Ham came to the United States in the early '90s—well, I guess late '80s—and worked for the Institute for Creation Research out in California. And he was getting a lot of people showing up at his talks and things, and he decided to go out on his own and start his own creationist ministry. And he came to Kentucky about 1993 and immediately started talking about his plans for a creation museum.

By the late 1990s, he was involved with actually raising a lot of money for this. He originally wanted to have the property for the Creation Museum in the vicinity of Big Bone Lick State Park, which is the birthplace of North American vertebrate paleontology.

[00:07:53] **Ross Blocher:** And you weren't going to stand for that.

[00:07:56] **Dan Phelps:** Right, there was a large zoning dispute over that, because the area is very rural, and there were lots of objections from the local neighbors. And it was felt that he was trying to get some of the credibility from the park. And there was also—the county that

that's in had a—I'm not sure the proper term for it—a plan for the future development of the region that wanted a real natural history museum in the area. He was claiming that was the real natural history museum.

[00:08:25] **Ross Blocher:** Oh no! So, he was already trying to blur the lines between sort of a legitimate scientific organization.

[00:08:32] **Dan Phelps:** So, there was a large opposition—both locals and the different secular groups and myself—that were fighting the zoning hearing. And he eventually lost. They eventually said that Boone County didn't want to put it in the area of Big Bone Lick, so Ham found an even more rural area that was off one of the side interstates, I-275, and bought a piece of property there and nobody really cared. Except for some of the neighbors objected, but it wasn't the big zoning dispute. And I figured—I didn't oppose it in any way, because I thought it was free speech. He could build it. If he had the money, he could build it wherever the hell he wanted.

[00:09:12] **Ross Blocher:** I get the “not in my backyard” kind of argument, but at least he's not building near a very important geological site.

[00:09:20] **Dan Phelps:** Right, it wasn't anything that was going to give him any sort of state credibility or any scientific credibility.

[00:09:26] **Ross Blocher:** And I've been there. So, it's near ish to the airport, so it's kind of accessible in that sense. And I assume you've been there?

[00:09:33] **Dan Phelps:** Oh, yeah, I went there the opening week and wrote a review for the National Center for Science Education.

[00:09:39] **Ross Blocher:** We'll link that on our Facebook page.

[00:09:41] **Dan Phelps:** I've done reviews of both the Art Park and the Creation Museum within weeks of their opening on National Center for Science Education.

[00:09:48] **Ross Blocher:** And you're a known quantity to Ken Ham and Answers in Genesis.

(Dan chuckles.)

Now, I noticed you'd mentioned in another interview that Ken Ham wrote a blog post about you, “Who is Dan Phelps?”. And—

[00:10:00] **Dan Phelps:** Oh! Wonderful.

[00:10:01] **Ross Blocher:** I can't find it on his current list of blogs, so he may have taken it down, but it is on the—it is on the Internet Archive though, so I was able to find it. His main argument there seemed to be, “Oh, well, this Dan Phelps guy, he says that we don't do any legitimate research.” Because they were—I guess they had gotten an Allosaurus specimen?

[00:10:21] **Dan Phelps:** Right, they were donated an Allosaurus skeleton by the White supremacist, Michael Peroutka. He was the former head of—or he wasn't the head; he was a board member of an organization called League of the South.

(Ross “oh no!”s.)

And through various bankruptcies and things, he had obtained an Allosaurus skeleton from Colorado. And this guy was a devout Young Earth Creationist and said he—he actually said at one point he was going to rebury the specimen if he couldn't find somebody to donate it to.

[00:10:51] **Ross Blocher:** Oh my goodness.

[00:10:52] **Dan Phelps:** So, he donated it to the Creation Museum, and they accepted it in spite of his White supremacist background.

[00:10:57] **Ross Blocher:** In spite of that.

[00:10:58] **Dan Phelps:** He's a neoconfederate. Anyway, somebody from the press contacted me and I said, “Well, it's going to be just a trophy. They basically are not going to do any research with it.” And I've been shown right over the years that they really haven't.

[00:11:10] **Ross Blocher:** And Ken Ham's rejoinder was, “Well, look, we have this one person who has um scientific bona fides. So, clearly you're wrong that we're not doing research.”

[00:11:19] **Dan Phelps:** Right. It was like I was the only person opposing them. And here's me with just a master's degree. And then, he has a PhD scientist from Australia that is a Young Earth Creationist.

[00:11:30] **Ross Blocher:** So, we've out-degreed you, so therefore we're doing real science with this fossil.

[00:11:35] **Dan Phelps:** Right, right. And of course, all the people working for the Answers in Genesis ministry have to sign a faith statement that they're Young Earth Creationists, and they have a whole laundry list of specifics about that. And they also have a lot of things they have to sign off on about being against various things in the culture wars. So, it was really funny. Ham eventually, in his “Who is Dan Phelps” blog post, he actually, at the very end, told his followers to pray that God would shine his light on my heart.

[00:12:07] **Ross Blocher:** How's that working out? That was ten years ago.

[00:12:09] **Dan Phelps:** Well, I haven't got any money out of it. I don't know.

(They laugh.)

[00:12:14] **Ross Blocher:** Come on God, keep shining that light! Amazing. So, it took him then about ten years after he got to Kentucky to get that initial museum up and running.

[00:12:28] **Dan Phelps:** Right. It went from like 1993 to the fights over zoning in the late '90s, all the way to 2007 before the Creation Museum was completed.

[00:12:37] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. Hot take on the Creation Museum: how do you like it as a museum? I mean, I gotta say like the design is good. It looks like a nice exhibit, but yeah. What's your kind of reaction beyond that?

[00:12:50] **Dan Phelps:** Well, first of all, I'd say it's not a museum, but we'll give them credit. They have wonderful artists working for them.

[00:12:57] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, okay. That's a good way to say it.

[00:12:58] **Dan Phelps:** They have really talented people on their staff, as far as the overall appearance of things. Of course, the content is total bullshit, but that's a different matter.

(They chuckle.)

But it does look nice, and I guess that's the best, nicest thing I can say about it.

[00:13:15] **Ross Blocher:** *(Laughing.)* Okay. And they don't have anybody at the ticket booth who's trained to recognize Dan Phelps and turn you away or anything like that?

[00:13:21] **Dan Phelps:** Uh, not to my knowledge, but back before the Ark Park opened, they were doing fundraisers for the art park. And they had this special meeting at the Creation Museum for potential financial backers. I signed up for it, and I went, and I brought a newspaper reporter—Joe Sonka—who is now with the Louisville Courier Journal. He's a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist. And Joe and I went in there, and I used my own name, and everything and I managed to get all of their papers about their financial plans and all these really neat things. I got a picture of myself taken with Ken Ham who didn't know who I was.

[00:14:00] **Ross Blocher:** At the meeting you got all this info. Okay.

[00:14:01] **Dan Phelps:** So, I got all this info from them. I had no more than left the building when I started getting emails that they realized I had been there and challenging me to debate them.

(Ross "oh!"s.)

They want people to debate them all the time.

[00:14:13] **Ross Blocher:** Well, that's—I mean, I guess good for them.

[00:14:16] **Dan Phelps:** But I wonder to this day if I'm ever recognized or anything.
(*Chuckles.*)

[00:14:19] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. One of Carrie's and my dubious distinctions is that we're included in the Scientology rogue's gallery.

(*Dan "oh!"s with a laugh.*)

So, people at Scientology around Los Angeles are trained to recognize us and turn us away. Because—

[00:14:34] **Dan Phelps:** Can you get in a Tom Cruise movie? (*Laughs.*)

[00:14:36] **Ross Blocher:** No, I don't see that happening any time soon.

[00:14:39] **Dan Phelps:** I know I tried after that to get into another special meeting they had where they're going to walk around the Ark property before they built the Ark. And I was turned down. And after that—well, this spring, I was suddenly banned from all of Ken Ham's social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, even though I had never commented on any of his posts or anything. They must have specifically gone through the list of people that belonged and recognized my name, and I was blocked from belonging to their social media accounts. But I got around that.

[00:15:11] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. But how petty.

[00:15:14] **Dan Phelps:** If I had gone on there and made all sorts of snarky remarks, I could understand it, but I never commented at all. (*Laughs.*)

[00:15:20] **Ross Blocher:** Now, did you ever take them up on one of these debate offers?

[00:15:23] **Dan Phelps:** No, no! You never want—you never want to formally debate the creationists. They do the Gish gallop where they throw out so much bullshit in a few minutes that you would have to take a whole day to refute. They know how to do this so well. I was on a radio show one time arguing—it wasn't really a formal debate; it was a back and forth with a creationist that works for them, named Terry Mortenson. He's got a degree in the history of science. And at the very end—I knew he was going to do it at some point during the discussion—he challenged me to a debate. And I told him, “Yeah, I'd be glad to debate,” but my form of debate would be for him to write a scientific paper showing that dinosaurs were dragons that were on Noah's Ark, and they were fire breathing and all this litany of crazy creationist claims about dinosaurs.

And he said, “Well, they would never publish that in a journal.”

(*They chuckle.*)

But I basically challenged him to submit this to any scientific journal, and I would be one of the reviewers. And he wouldn't take me up on that. He wanted me to debate in front of a church or school audience, where they would bus in people from three or four or five counties away. And no, that's not the way scientific debate works. Scientific debate occurs in scientific journals and at scientific meetings.

[00:16:39] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. So, you knew how this was gonna go, and you said, "Let's not even bother. This is not a truth-seeking operation."

[00:16:46] **Dan Phelps:** Right. I mean, people back in the 1980s—well, actually from the 1970s through the '80s—fell for this all the time. You would have a famous scientist would think they would get up and debate somebody like Duane Gish and do really well, when in fact, even if you ignored the fact the audience was totally against the scientists, everybody would say that Duane Gish won, even though his information might have been pure fakery and, you know, cranky stuff. You would still not win in a debate against somebody like that.

[00:17:19] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, and you've mentioned Gish and the Gish gallop, and you even described what it's like. But for anyone not familiar, Duane Gish was one of the "leading lights", quote/unquote, of the creation movement. And his signature move was just to make so many claims so fast, and then the scientists would get a chance to respond and get to say a few things or maybe take on one point. But there was no actual way that someone could take on every single one of those points, because it takes a lot longer to explain the real science than it does to drop that misinformation.

[00:17:49] **Dan Phelps:** Exactly, and it's still that way when you're arguing with creationists. They'll bring up a dozen things, and you can—you might know the arguments against 11 of them, but the 12th one—I've never heard that one before. I don't know what the solution to that is. And they go, "Aha! We won."

(Ross agrees.)

That's just not the way things are done.

[00:18:08] **Ross Blocher:** Okay, so now we have a creation museum as of 2006, 2007, I guess they opened?

[00:18:13] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, 2007. It was like Memorial Day 2007.

[00:18:16] **Ross Blocher:** So, then Ken Ham begins working behind the scenes on his next big vision, which is building this Ark Park. They should have called it that. They called it the Ark Encounter. Yeah, tell us a bit about just what was involved in getting the zoning rights, approval, funding. Really want to hear about kind of what the struggle was.

[00:18:37] **Dan Phelps:** Okay, well, there were a lot of things going on. Like you said, he probably was planning this behind the scenes. If he had been smart, he'd have done—he'd have started with the Ark and done the Creation Museum second.

[00:18:49] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, really? Why is that?

[00:18:50] **Dan Phelps:** Because of just the appeal of the big ark-shaped building. But about 2010, it was announced—late 2010, it was announced to the public. And what I was able to find out was that he had gone to the city of Williamstown, which is in northern-central Kentucky.

[00:19:09] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, yeah. Why would he choose Williamstown?

[00:19:11] **Dan Phelps:** Well, he managed to wine and dine the locals. And he was able to persuade the locals that it would be just the biggest thing ever to happen to the city. I actually went to one of the public meetings where people involved with the Ark were practically claiming that the streets would be paved with gold before the thing was over. They originally said that there would be 1.4 to 2.2 million visitors a year.

(Ross “wow”s.)

So, the locals at Williamstown sold the Ark 98 acres of land for \$1, in addition to the land they actually bought.

[00:19:46] **Ross Blocher:** Wait, say that again. How much did they sell? How much land?

[00:19:48] **Dan Phelps:** They sold 98 acres of land adjacent to where the Ark is built for \$1.

[00:19:54] **Ross Blocher:** One dollar?!

[00:19:56] **Dan Phelps:** One dollar. There was also a leak where one of the locals on like the city commission or something like that had let it leak out that the Ark was going to be buying property. And of course, the locals—somebody locally got greedy and decided to ask more for their property. So, the city also gave AIG, Answers in Genesis, \$175,000 in cash.

(Ross “woah!”s.)

The city then reduced property taxes on the Ark, and then there was the big debate where Kentucky Tourism, when this was announced, decided to give the Ark Encounter—originally it was gonna be an amount in the \$143 million range over a 10-year period, but it was finally reduced down to \$18 and a quarter million dollars over a 10-year period where they get their sales tax back.

(Ross “wow”s.)

So, any sales tax they pay to the state, they get up to \$1.825 million a year back from Kentucky tourism as a sales tax rebate.

[00:20:57] **Ross Blocher:** These are huge incentives.

[00:20:59] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, and it's still going on for another—you know, it was a 10-year run on this, so they still have several years they'll be receiving 1.825 million a year from the state. They also had the city reduce the property tax on the Ark. When they were having trouble raising the investment money, the city ended up—Williamstown ended up issuing \$62 million in unsecured junk bonds for the construction of the Ark.

[00:21:23] **Ross Blocher:** Oh my goodness, okay.

[00:21:24] **Dan Phelps:** And I think they mortgaged a lot of their own property and bought a lot of their own bonds, but I can't really prove that. Another thing, the local government in Bingley County, as well as city—75% of Ark Encounter's property taxes go to repaying these bonds instead of to local government.

(Ross starts to speak but Dan continues.)

The list keeps going on. I'm sorry to keep interrupting you!

[00:21:48] **Ross Blocher:** Oh no, I want to hear the whole list. Though I am curious to know like how many of these incentives, bonds, tax are just special consideration vs. like actually illegal or improper?

[00:22:02] **Dan Phelps:** Well, I don't think any of it's really illegal. I'll get back to the money from the state tourism in a little bit. But the local stuff is currently all legal. They also make—anybody that works at the Ark Encounter has to pay 2% of their wages to the Ark bond debt for the next 30 years.

(Ross “wow”s.)

In spite of already getting low amounts of money as pay. You know, their pay isn't spectacular for the people that work there.

[00:22:29] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah! Why put that on the employees? Okay.

[00:22:32] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah. And the state transportation cabinet spent \$11 million to upgrade the interstate I-75 exits, because there were supposedly big traffic jams, because there were so many people visiting the Ark. And of course, that (*inaudible*).

[00:22:47] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. I told in my tale of visiting the Ark, it was really hard—well, it was hard to get transportation to there from the airport, because I didn't have a car. I got, you know, like a Lyft service. But getting back from the Ark was incredibly difficult. It's quite remote.

[00:23:07] **Dan Phelps:** It's very rural.

[00:23:08] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, and there's just not a lot—there were I think like two restaurants that I could see in the town outside of the Ark property and beyond the one that

was at the hotel where I was staying. So, not a lot of food options, no transportation options. It took me pretty much a full day just to get transportation back to the airport. So, yeah, it doesn't seem like they've built quite the huge draw that they claimed. But I'll let you keep talking about—I want to hear more about these incentives before we get to their performance.

[00:23:38] **Dan Phelps:** Well, another thing they got—I look at their 990 forms that all nonprofits have to submit to the Internal Revenue Service.

[00:23:45] **Ross Blocher:** Carrie's really good at pulling up these 990 forms. You can learn a lot from them. And this is all mandated reporting, right?

[00:23:51] **Dan Phelps:** Right, and they claim the Ark building—at least at one point they claimed it was worth 130 million. They depreciate it a little bit every year, but with the local county PVA—the property tax evaluation, they assess the Ark as being worth \$48 million.

[00:24:06] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, less than half—almost 1/3rd of what Answers in Genesis was saying.

[00:24:09] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, yeah, and on top of that, of course, they get reduced property tax rates as well. So, it's very similar to some of the things that got Trump in trouble in New York, where you're claiming a piece of property is worth so much money at one point when you're getting loans and when you're doing stuff like that. And then, all at once, it's worth so much less when you're being taxed on it.

[00:24:31] **Ross Blocher:** Right. Yeah. When you want to impress people, “Oh, it's worth a ton.” But “Oh, wait, you want to get money from us? Well, actually it's really not worth that much. We're losing a lot of money.” So, okay. They're playing that same game, which that sounds like that does kind of get to the edge of legality.

[00:24:46] **Dan Phelps:** Exactly. And I'm not a lawyer, so I can't speak to whether they've done any shenanigans or not. It's really something that I'm always trying to get the local newspapers to look into, but they're more interested in sports and stuff like that than any sort of government problems.

Another thing they did was during covid, they switched a lot of Answers in Genesis employees—which is a nonprofit—to being working for the for-profit, Crosswater Canyon—the group that actually runs the Ark. You know, they have a number of shell companies, which are alternately nonprofits and for-profits, and it gets really confusing. It seems like they decide it's whatever's to their best advantage, whether they're nonprofit or for-profit.

[00:25:27] **Ross Blocher:** Interesting!

[00:25:29] **Dan Phelps:** But anyway, during covid, they switched a lot of their employees from the nonprofit to the for-profit so they could get money from the Paycheck Protection Program. They received a million dollars from that.

[00:25:42] **Ross Blocher:** A PPP loan.

[00:25:43] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, yeah. So, that was a big deal.

[00:25:46] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. Can you describe—'cause I don't know anything about this. Can you describe a little more this corporate structure that they built? So, it's not all Answers in Genesis.

[00:25:54] **Dan Phelps:** So, they have several different shell companies. It's really bizarre. The main thing that oversees everything is Answers in Genesis. It's a nonprofit ministry, so they have to turn in a 990 form every year to the federal government, to the IRS. And they own Answers in Genesis, and they operate the Creation Museum. They're the parent company of a thing called Crosswater Canyon, which is a nonprofit ministry that operates The Ark Encounter. But they're also the parent company of Ark Encounter, which is a for-profit business that makes money via the tourism tax rebate program. They also own something called the—it was called the Twelve Stones Christian Academy, now it's called Answers Academy. It's a private K-12 school that I think they have the eyes on eventually being some sort of charter school or making some sort of money from voucher, if we ever get that here in Kentucky.

And something else really interesting, and I think it's just brilliant on their part; they own something called Answers Collective. And Answers Collective owns a corporate jet, along with—apparently they co-own it with several other companies. And Answers Collective is paid for by the money people pay to park at the Ark. They have this big parking lot that charges 10 or 15 each to park.

[00:27:21] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, it's huge.

[00:27:22] **Dan Phelps:** And that funds the corporate jet. And I find that absolutely brilliant! I mean—(*laughs*).

[00:27:29] **Ross Blocher:** Woow! It's funny, there's always a corporate jet involved in any of these organizations. Okay.

[00:27:33] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, they went down to Daytona. Ken Ham and a bunch of the executives at Answers in Genesis went down to the Daytona 500 NASCAR race, because they have a car with the Ark on it. Some lawncare company has paid for that particular car, but they flew the corporate jet down to Daytona and flew it back to Kentucky.

[00:27:53] **Ross Blocher:** Amazing.

[00:27:54] **Dan Phelps:** There's another organization that's peripherally associated with Answers in Genesis, and some of it shows up on their 994s. It's called Takenbac Industries. Spelled T-A-K-E-N-B-A-C. And Takenbac Enterprises is owned 50% by Answers in Genesis, and it's for-profit. And they somehow buy a property and sell it at a profit. And I'm not really sure of the exact nature of that. But it's yet another shell company owned by Answers—or partly owned by Answers in Genesis.

[00:28:31] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, I've lost count at this point. How many shell companies are we talking about here?

[00:28:35] **Dan Phelps:** Well, underneath the Answers in Genesis umbrella, you have Ark Encounter for-profit, Crosswater Canyon nonprofit, the Answers Academy Christian School, and you also have Answers Collective that owns the jet, and then you have Takenbac Enterprises.

[00:28:52] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. So, at least five of these subsidiaries—and sounds like this gives them license to just kind of shift things around and change reporting and change tax structuring whenever they need to kind of push money one way or the other.

[00:29:06] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, it is whatever they want it to be at the moment. And if you ever watch the documentary *We Believe in Dinosaurs*, a lot of this is mentioned in that documentary. But one of the things that Ken Ham is quoted in and saying at that particular—at the opening of the Ark, and he said, “Let me say this for all the media: not one cent has come from taxpayer money.” (*Laughs.*)

[00:29:27] **Ross Blocher:** Right! Yeah. And I've heard that repeated, like when I was there at the Ark, they were trying to make it sound like they'd really picked themselves up by their own bootstraps. Is that technically correct, even?

[00:29:40] **Dan Phelps:** It's a sin of omission, I guess. I was raised Catholic, and you can lie, and it's either an outright lie. Or if you don't lie and leave something out, it's called a sin of omission. (*Laughs.*)

[00:29:53] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. Okay, Ken Ham, you're being called out for that. Now, certainly his claims that he made of just how big of a draw this would be—of course, you know, some of that has to be speculation. But how successful, in your mind and according to the numbers, has the Ark encounter been compared with Ken Ham's vision?

[00:30:11] **Dan Phelps:** Well, what I do every month—back in 2017, after they had been open about a year, local governments started realizing that the attendance wasn't quite as good as they expected, yet they were still having to spend a lot more money on fire and police protection for the Ark. So, they started a new a local city tax of 50 cents. 50 cents per ticket sold at the Ark. That is public record. So, every month I do an open records request, and I'm able to gauge their actual number of tickets they've sold. Now, they always claim attendance is much higher than my numbers, because they let kids under 10 years old in for free. A lot of lifetime pass members apparently out here that must visit quite often according to them. Although, I'm very skeptical of that last part. But I'm able to find out how many people visit every year—or every month, actually—and I would say their best they've done is maybe 900,000 in a single year. In a single year.

[00:31:14] **Ross Blocher:** In a single year! Okay, so not quite a million. And he was estimating how many per year?

[00:31:19] **Dan Phelps:** Anywhere from 1.4 to as many as 2.2 million a year. So, they are not bringing in the money that—at least from ticket sales. But yet they're getting money from somewhere. They just bought a former Toyota headquarters building in northern Kentucky that they're putting the school in, and they're moving their headquarters to that building. They are probably at least partial owners of the local Hampton Inn that is adjacent to the Ark. They sold a little piece of property. And it appears that—I can't prove the new hotel is solely owned by the Ark, but at least it's partially owned. The same post office blocks as the Ark, as Answers in Genesis, actually controls the new hotel.

[00:32:05] **Ross Blocher:** And is that open yet? I can't recall.

[00:32:08] **Dan Phelps:** Oh yeah, it opened this spring. This spring, yeah.

[00:32:11] **Ross Blocher:** Oh! Okay, because—

[00:32:13] **Dan Phelps:** It's a nice-looking hotel, and apparently if you get one of the penthouse rooms, you can see the Ark from the penthouse.

[00:32:18] **Ross Blocher:** Okay, I think it was still under construction when I came to visit, because I stayed at a small, I'm pretty sure independent hotel that was right down the street from it and an easy walk for me. But yeah, that Hampton Inn & Suites building was still under construction. So, okay. That just finally launched this year.

[00:32:35] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, so that's open now, and they're at least partly owning it. Whether they own the whole thing, I can't swear to. I just don't have enough information, because it's owned by a corporation up in Ohio, and sometimes it's hard to get all the records I would like. That's one reason I'm really hoping other people would eventually start helping me out. I'm a dumb geologist. How do I know how to use public records?

(Ross chuckles.)

I really wish other people would help me out.

[00:32:57] **Ross Blocher:** And it's just been your beat for all these years. And you're doing it well enough that nobody's stepping up, huh?

[00:33:04] **Dan Phelps:** Right, right. And people aren't helping out with some of these important things that probably a good attorney or somebody with an investigative background could probably find the information for me.

[00:33:14] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. How have they been doing lately? Are the numbers getting better/worse post pandemic?

[00:33:20] **Dan Phelps:** They're not doing as good as they did before covid. For a while, they've sort of rebounded a little bit. I mean, during covid, they had really lousy numbers. You can't fault them that. I mean, but they have failed to rebound to the extent of pre covid

numbers. So, they're not doing all that well. But yet, they're getting so much money donated to them, and it's hard to figure out who is actually doing the donations and how much it is. It's usually redacted from the 990 forms who is actually donating the money.

[00:33:48] **Ross Blocher:** Interesting. So, it could be—well, you could speculate endlessly, but maybe church groups or private donators.

[00:33:54] **Dan Phelps:** Somebody—it could be the Hobby Lobby people. I don't know. It could be the Museum of the Bible, which is associated with the Hobby Lobby people.

[00:34:02] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, there's an interesting kind of history behind that family. I don't know if you know too much about—

[00:34:07] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, the Greens, yeah.

[00:34:08] **Ross Blocher:** Do you know much about that interaction? 'Cause yeah, when I was there, a big chunk of the third deck of the Ark is a little miniature Museum of the Bible, like the one they have in Washington, DC, but with a lot of reproductions of some of these important biblical—

[00:34:24] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, they've lent them a lot of stuff from the Museum of the Bible. So, yeah, there's some sort of association there, but still somehow they were able to afford the 31 million that went to this new former Toyota building. And that's just amazing. Somehow they were able to afford the new hotel. And it's really interesting. I'm not really sure what's going on and who's giving the money.

[00:34:44] **Ross Blocher:** And that's not public record?

[00:34:46] **Dan Phelps:** That's how I sort of got famous on this was during the tax incentives, they swore up and down to state government they weren't going to discriminate in hiring. They said they would hire anybody regardless of religious faith.

[00:34:58] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, that's hard to even imagine.

[00:35:00] **Dan Phelps:** And in August, when the thing was first approved by state government, I was able to find—August of 2014, I was able to find an advertisement on the Answers in Genesis page for somebody working at the Ark Encounter that it required signing a statement of faith. The statement of faith includes all the Young Earth Creationist stuff, you have to tell what church you go to, you have to attend a local Bible believing church. There's just a whole laundry list of things that you have to be to be hired by them. And yet, this job was advertised for the Ark. So, I wrote an op ed for the local newspaper, the *Lexington Herald Leader*.

[00:35:41] **Ross Blocher:** Good for you.

[00:35:42] **Dan Phelps:** It got a little bit of attention, and then Americans United for Separation of Church and State, they wrote the governor's office and the tourism cabinet a letter saying, “Hey, they're discriminating in hiring.” And the tourism cabinet and the governor said, “Well, we can't really support a company that's going to discriminate in the hiring.” So, they took the tax incentives away from them temporarily, and then the whole thing ended up in court. And they got this conservative Christian judge to actually rule in their favor.

[00:36:13] **Ross Blocher:** Really?!

[00:36:14] **Dan Phelps:** And at the same time, we got a new governor—an ultra conservative, fundamentalist Christian called Matt Bevin, who decided not to appeal the loss of the lawsuit.

[00:36:23] **Ross Blocher:** So, the winds just happened to blow their way and—yeah, I'd be curious to know how that judge justified what's clearly an abrogation of the law there.

[00:36:33] **Dan Phelps:** Well, they said they didn't have requirements for non-Christian groups or any other secular group. Therefore, Christians would be discriminated against if they did not get the tax incentive. Which was a really bizarre take on things.

(*Ross “wow”s.*)

But anyway, this is all in the documentary, *We Believe in Dinosaurs*.

[00:36:50] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, which you're featured in.

[00:36:51] **Dan Phelps:** Right, right. I mean, it's how I got sort of famous on this issue was that I was the one that initially stopped them getting the \$18 and a quarter million. And unfortunately, it lost in court. I never had anything to do with any of the lawsuit or anything, and it was really frightening that they lost. And within a few weeks, we had the new governor that would not appeal the decision.

[00:37:15] **Ross Blocher:** Ah, bummer. Especially since you're just trying to advocate for science in your home state.

[00:37:22] **Dan Phelps:** Right. I mean, it was very discouraging that this happened, because I'm always going to oppose them for the non-science and pseudoscience and fake science. I really hate to call it pseudoscience. It's not even—it's so bad it's not even pseudoscience.

(*Ross chuckles.*)

At least, pseudoscience, there's some sort of trapping of science that is not true. But this is just total—what's the technical word? I think it's—

[00:37:48] **Ross Blocher:** Junk science?

[00:37:49] **Dan Phelps:** Bullshit is the actual word.

[00:37:53] **Ross Blocher:** Fair! But I mean, they are trying to use the trapping of science in that they have like a lab with microscopes, and they vaunt their PhDs and, you know, their various other pretensions to scientific credibility. So, they really are trying to borrow all the trappings of science, which certainly does make them pseudoscience. But I take your point in that what they're doing is so far removed from the scientific enterprise.

[00:38:17] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, I mean, pseudoscience would be like maybe touting a medicine that didn't work by doing rather biased double-blind tests and getting it published in a journal only to be later retracted, because something was poorly put together or poor methodology. But this doesn't even qualify—in my opinion, doesn't even qualify even as pseudoscience. They're not even at the level of being pseudoscience.

[00:38:40] **Ross Blocher:** Fair enough. I don't know if there's any way to access this kind of information, but do you get any indication of how many out of state visitors are coming? Is this mostly Kentuckians?

[00:38:51] **Dan Phelps:** Hard to say. I'd say the majority of people are visiting out of state. Since covid ended, they're getting a lot more senior citizens on bus trips. That ended during covid, and that really hurt them bad. And they were doing pretty good on the bus tours, but post covid the bus tours are back, but they don't seem as numerous as they once were. But as far as going through the parking lot, I'd say the vast majority are out of state. And remember, it's really expensive to visit the Ark. I mean, they—

[00:39:22] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, what's the current ticket price?

[00:39:23] **Dan Phelps:** Oh gosh! I mean, I think they sell a combined ticket to the Ark and the Creation Museum, and it's over \$100.

(Ross “wow”s.)

And last time I went to the Ark—well, the first time I went on opening day. Well, not opening day but at least a couple days after they opened, with the film crew from the documentary series. And I got in free on that, because the documentary people had either bought my ticket or been given freebies, something like that. But the second time I took Eugenie Scott, this was like in 2017.

[00:39:51] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, what a trip!

[00:39:52] **Dan Phelps:** It cost us, at that time, almost \$60 each. And off the top of my head—I'd have to go to their website and tell you the exact amount.

[00:39:59] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, shoot, wait. I should be able to pretty quickly pull up how much it was when I was there.

[00:40:03] **Dan Phelps:** But it's far more expensive than a like the Natural History Museum up in Cincinnati or the Children's Museum in Indianapolis. Even places like that are fairly expensive, like the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, still are cheaper than the Ark Park.

[00:40:19] **Ross Blocher:** I believe it. Okay, I'm looking at the Creation Museum. This is when I was there, and that was about a year and a half ago. They had—a combo ticket for adults was \$85 for the Ark and the Creation Museum. And then, if you were over 60, it's \$75. And then 11-17 was \$45, and 10 and under is free, as you were mentioning. And then, they had various other bundles and whatnot. But yeah, that's a good ticket price for sure.

[00:40:50] **Promo:**

(Fantastical tinkling and sparkle sounds.)

Narrator: *(Echoing.)* Somewhere, in an alternate universe where Hollywood is smarter.

(Harp chords fade into applause.)

Presenter: And the Emmy nominees for Outstanding Comedy Series are *Jetpackula*. *Airport Marriott*. *Throuple*. *Dear America*, *We've Seen You Naked*. And *Allah in the Family*.

(Applause fades into harp chords.)

Narrator: *(Echoing.)* In our stupid universe, you can't see any of these shows. But you can listen to them on *Dead Pilots Society*.

(Rock music fades in.)

The podcast that brings you hilarious comedy pilots that the networks and streamers bought but never made. Journey to the alternate television universe of *Dead Pilots Society* on MaximumFun.org.

(Music fades out.)

[00:41:34] **Ross Blocher:** Now, we were talking before this about the opening day. So, they opened the Ark up—you said July 7th?

[00:41:42] **Dan Phelps:** July 7th.

[00:41:43] **Ross Blocher:** 2017?

[00:41:44] **Dan Phelps:** 2016.

[00:41:45] **Ross Blocher:** Okay, so they were, you said, trying to go numerologically for as many sevens as they could?

[00:41:51] **Dan Phelps:** There was something they said that was to the effect that it was some sort of bible verse that started out with—different ones that started out with sevens. I can't remember which one it was.

[00:42:02] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, interesting! Okay, maybe even referring to the animals or something. Okay, that might be fun to track down.

(Audio changes.)

This future Ross, here. I'll just jump in real quick to say I did find on the Ark Encounter website where they mentioned this. 7.7.16 numeric significance. And they say, "We wanted to choose an opening day that had significance. And so, like we do in every aspect of the Answers in Genesis ministry, we started with God's word. Genesis 7:7 says, 'So, Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his son's wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood.' Using the verse reference, 7:7, as a date—July 7th—gives us the most appropriate time to allow the public to enter the ark as well." And further down the page, they say, "So, we decided to have two sessions per day for people to come visit, one in the day and one at night, for the first 40 days and 40 nights to play off of the 40 days and nights of rain in Genesis 7:12." So, there you go. Okay, we'll get back to the interview.

(Original audio resumes.)

Yeah, I was almost surprised that Ken Ham didn't open it up on July 17th, wait another 10 days, because that's the day that Disneyland had its official opening in 1955. And I got the impression both from feedback from a former employee and just from hearing him talk that it seems like he has a real chip on his shoulder that he wants to kind of do Disney better than Walt Disney. It's sort of a love/hate thing where he's sort of inspired/wants to show up Disney and do it better. Have you ever gotten any indication of that competition?

[00:43:37] **Dan Phelps:** I've heard him compare his attractions to Disney, but it's really, really sad actually.

(They chuckle.)

Back—I remember some of the things that I went to in the city of Williamstown when they were touting the project to the locals. They were going to have all these different things. They were going to have a parade of animals where people were dressed like—you know, how Disney has people in the suits. They were gonna be like animals going up the gangplank of the ark.

[00:44:04] **Ross Blocher:** Aw. I was just at Disneyland yesterday. They put on an elaborate parade. So, he thought he was going to do the same.

[00:44:09] **Dan Phelps:** They were gonna do a parade every day, and the big pond in front of the ark was gonna have big fountains to represent the fountains of the great deep opening up for the flood.

(Ross “wow”s.)

There were all these crazy Disney-esque type things that they came up with.

[00:44:24] **Ross Blocher:** Amazing. And so far none of that has come to fruition. Now, I've seen like a map that Answers in Genesis has publicized where they have this future vision, this like 10-, 20-year vision of what the park is going to be with like a semi constructed Tower of Babel and like a recreation of Jerusalem. How much do you know about that plan, and how likely do you think it is to actually come to fruition?

[00:44:49] **Dan Phelps:** Well, I think they will eventually have it, because they seem to be rolling in money in spite of their attendance. But they've been working on the city of Jerusalem model they bought from some defunct fundamentalist theme park down in Florida. And they're working on the Tower of Babel (*bay-ble*), or Babel (*bab-le*). They're going to have a ride where you take a ride, and it's through the history of the Hebrews escaping the Pharaoh and stuff like that.

[00:45:15] **Ross Blocher:** Oh my goodness, none of this is historical.

[00:45:16] **Dan Phelps:** I'm not sure you want to take—I'm not sure you'd want to take your firstborn son along with that ride.

(They laugh.)

But anyway, it ends up the Tower of Babel is going to be a big movie theater, is my understanding. They're working on that. I think they have the plans for it, but I don't know if they've even—I don't think they've even started anything towards it. One worry I have is that they will eventually try to get more tourism money. We have a very large chance that we might get another conservative governor this November. And if that happens, the Kentucky attorney general—his name is Daniel Cameron. He's running for governor. And he visited the Ark back in late 2021. He got a personal tour from Ken Ham. And he got to go on the fourth deck of the Ark, which the public generally is not allowed to go on, and got a personal tour and spent most of the day at the Ark.

And when I did an open records request, all I got was some photographs, and none of the people were named. I tried to get the mileage of the vehicles, who went on the trip—because there were other state employees that were obviously there, as well as security guards. I was denied everything like that, and when I appealed, guess who in Kentucky oversees the appeal of an open records request denial?

[00:46:38] **Ross Blocher:** The governor?

[00:46:39] **Dan Phelps:** No, the Attorney General! The very guy that (*inaudible*).

[00:46:42] **Ross Blocher:** Oooh, this guy who wants to be governor, okay. Oh no! So, yeah, you want records of his visit, and he's not forthcoming with them.

[00:46:52] **Dan Phelps:** No. No, I don't know what was discussed. I wasn't able to get a hold of the actual setup for the event, what type of email correspondence set it up, who went, how much gas mileage was put on the vehicles, all those different things were denied me.

[00:47:07] **Ross Blocher:** Which should be available, if they're—

[00:47:08] **Dan Phelps:** I think any other government entity, I could have gotten the information, but. And they didn't even use a merit system employee; they used a political appointee to deny me the appeal.

[00:47:19] **Ross Blocher:** Boy, I would love to see that fourth deck of the Ark. If anybody from Answers in Genesis is listening, I will come back out if you let me go up there.

[00:47:29] **Dan Phelps:** (*Chuckles.*) They were originally going to put a fancy restaurant there, but I understand that never came to be.

[00:47:33] **Ross Blocher:** You know, you gotta hand it to Ken Ham. He's a man of vision. He definitely does—

[00:47:38] **Dan Phelps:** He's brilliant! He might be bad at science related things, but he's brilliant about knowing his audience, the NASCAR thing, financing the corporate jet. That is just so brilliant. It's—

[00:47:50] **Ross Blocher:** It's sad to see all this creative energy poured into all the wrong things.

(Dan chuckles and agrees.)

I can see his review from this interview. Dan Phelps says, “Ken Ham is brilliant!”

(They laugh.)

So, another thing that I've heard about is that at one point they had to file for flood insurance, which is just entertaining right on its face. Now, when you get into the details, it's not quite as funny as you would think. You know, it wasn't like the ark itself flooded.

[00:48:19] **Dan Phelps:** No, they had a lot of rainfall, and they had a side access road that they had cut down all the vegetation and trees and all that would have rooted the thing in place. And if they had only had a decent geologist working for them that could have told them not to do that!

(Ross laughs.)

But what happened was there was a lot of rain, and there was a big slump that took out part of the road, and they had to anchor it in place with special pilings and a fence and rebuild the road. And a lot of it probably was due to fractures in the pond in front of the Ark. So, when

they made the press, they were suing their insurance company, because the Ark was damaged by a rainfall.

(Ross giggles.)

And they could have—I mean that's hilarious as far as a headline.

(Ross agrees.)

That's not really what happened, but they could have had a good sense of humor about it and made light of themselves and come out looking at least not as a bunch of jerks. But they got all upset that everybody was saying this.

[00:49:13] **Ross Blocher:** Aw, that is pretty rich.

[00:49:15] **Dan Phelps:** They didn't properly go with the flow and laugh along with everybody. But I have pictures of the slump and stuff. If I ever get out to California, I'll show you the slideshow that I'm looking at for some of my—reminder of some of the different things. Anyway, a friend of mine that used to work for the Ark, he was in their IT section. He was saying on one of the blogs—or not the blogs but one of the podcasts he appeared on—that while he was there, they actually were out with dowsing rods around the pond, trying to find the fractures leading from the pond to the slumping shale area.

[00:49:49] **Ross Blocher:** What?! Oh my goodness.

[00:49:56] **Dan Phelps:** Which is hilarious that they would believe in dowsing rods. That shocks me, actually, at a certain level.

[00:50:03] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, absolutely! I mean, because that's a form of divination. That should—I mean, you'd think if Ken Ham knew about that, he would be upset, because that's witchcraft. If it works. Of course, it doesn't.

[00:50:14] **Dan Phelps:** Well, I guess they might think there's some pseudo-scientific way that it works instead of witchcraft. But again, there's no scientific basis.

[00:50:20] **Ross Blocher:** That's wild.

[00:50:23] **Dan Phelps:** And it's—but yet there were people out there with, apparently—this is sort of secondhand from a friend that used to work there, but there were people out there with dowsing rods trying to find the fractures and where they led to the slumped area.

[00:50:36] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, that's embarrassing. Well, yeah, that's not going to help you. And like you say, not hiring proper geologists to advise you on trees that you're uprooting.

[00:50:43] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, if they only had some geologist on staff, you know?

(They laugh.)

[00:50:48] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, where might they find a geologist? Who knows any geologists?

[00:50:52] **Dan Phelps:** The area is very well known for the rock formations there called the Kope Formation. It's a shaley unit that if you try to build along a steep embankment, you better make sure things are really secure and that you don't tear up the vegetation, because it's very liable to slumping and erosion, and that's exactly what they have. I mean, it's a textbook example. I have a picture in front of me right now. It's a textbook example of a slump.

[00:51:19] **Ross Blocher:** Can you define a slump?

[00:51:21] **Dan Phelps:** Well, it's usually a place that there's been some sort of movement in either unconsolidated or loosely consolidated sediment. In this case, it's some of the clay minerals inside the rock unit that's there that when they get wet, they expand. And because of this, there's these things called listric faults, and the faults slump down slope. They're just gravity driven. But the whole thing has been weakened by the expansion of some of the clay minerals and stuff. And if they had had any sense, they wouldn't have removed all the vegetation they did.

[00:51:52] **Ross Blocher:** It is indeed rich that the Ark Encounter would have water management issues, that rain would be a big problem for them.

[00:52:00] **Dan Phelps:** *(Laughs.)* And they should have played along with the joke, you know?

[00:52:03] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, yeah! Absolutely. Yeah, you're right. That's a good opportunity to show that you're a good egg, and they missed it. You mentioned that you have other information on slides. Is there any other good stuff we haven't covered there?

[00:52:13] **Dan Phelps:** Oh gosh, some of the displays in the Ark itself are just a hoot. They have dinosaurs in cages.

[00:52:21] **Ross Blocher:** Oh yeah, I'm a good expert on this in our series. I kind of walked everybody virtually through all of these exhibits, though I know they're constantly updating too.

[00:52:29] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, did you see the one where they have the dinosaurs fighting the people in the pre-flood arena?

[00:52:35] **Ross Blocher:** Yes! And in fact, I've been reading—one of their main exhibit creators wrote a series of books—Tim Chaffey!

[00:52:43] **Dan Phelps:** He wrote three. Not just one but three novels that this particular—

[00:52:49] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, I've read the first two.

[00:52:50] **Dan Phelps:** It has Noah, some woman, and a couple of giants fighting a Carnotaurus in this pre-flood arena.

[00:52:59] **Ross Blocher:** Yep, that's exactly what happened.

[00:53:00] **Dan Phelps:** And it's beautifully done! But it would be a hilarious sort of steampunk-like a grade B, grade C movie that would be on the Science Fiction channel.

[00:53:11] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, yeah, it's, you know, just the right amount of fun anachronisms that's fun for fiction but kind of embarrassing when you're trying to pass it off as alternate history.

[00:53:19] **Dan Phelps:** But a number of their displays are based on some of the books and all they've written about Noah that are fiction.

[00:53:27] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah! They have this invented language, though it's just kind of a cipher for English. So, I took the time to break it down and figure out what all the little signs were. And they were mostly like little passages from the Bible or little side stories, nothing of any huge import.

[00:53:43] **Dan Phelps:** They gave Mrs. Noah and all of Noah's wives names, and they're never mentioned by name in the Bible. So, they made names up. And they have this one little sign about artistic invention at the Ark. Artistic license, rather, is the term.

[00:53:58] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, to their credit, they say Ark-tistic license, which, you know.

[00:54:00] **Dan Phelps:** Oh, yeah! (*Laughs.*)

[00:54:02] **Ross Blocher:** I'll tip the hat to that.

[00:54:05] **Dan Phelps:** But anyway, before the Ark was built, there was a movie with Russell Crowe about Noah's Ark. It was a really bad movie, at least in my opinion, a really bad movie.

(Ross agrees.)

But Ken Ham raised hell about that movie because all of the stuff they invented that wasn't biblical. And here he does the same freaking thing in his own Ark Park by making stuff up that isn't in the Bible!

[00:54:31] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, you know, they do put a lot of disclaimers up, so maybe he just feels he's being more principled about it than Darren Aronofsky was. But yeah, I'm with you. And it gives them something to publicly rail about and get attention, and it seems like they're pretty good at getting attention.

[00:54:46] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, it's always hard to say who's listening to them. I'm really not sure. They might just have their own echo chamber, but it's hard to tell. But anyway, their big restaurant—they have a buffet restaurant right next to the ark that seats like 1,500 people.

[00:54:58] **Ross Blocher:** Ah, Emzara's Kitchen. Yeah, named after Noah's wife.

[00:55:01] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, it has Noah's wife. Emzara is her name according to this. You know, it's really hilarious. (*Laughs.*)

[00:55:09] **Ross Blocher:** So, do you have a sense overall just how much of a money sink this has been versus a boon to Kentucky tourism?

[00:55:17] **Dan Phelps:** It's really hard to say. I mean, like I said, they are not making anywhere near the numbers they projected. The adjacent town is not getting any business to amount to anything out of this. There are hotels in the region up at Dry Ridge, which is, you know, 15 miles or so—or 10 miles up the road or so. They have additional hotels, but that might be due to the expansion of the Cincinnati area. So, the Ark takes credit, or Ken Ham takes credit for a lot of that. But I'm not really sure that there's any—the little town just is being treated like crap. Back when the documentary, *We Believe in Dinosaurs*, came out, it was aired on PBS in—three weeks before covid really got the start around here in late February of 2020.

Somebody from the local paper, she did a story. It was basically an op ed about the documentary that myself and several other people were in. And Ken Ham responded to it. Yeah, he said—he responded in an op ed, “We wanted to point out this documentary, entitled *We Believe in Dinosaurs*, was an agenda-driven propaganda piece that focused on dinosaurs and the Ark Encounter. In reality, however, dinosaurs represent a mere fraction of Ark exhibits. The producers ignored the Ark's massive impact and instead focused on one small town that had no major hotels and restaurants and whose struggling downtown is not convenient to interstate drivers.” Well, that one small town is Williamstown, the very town that—

[00:56:50] **Ross Blocher:** Where the Ark is located.

[00:56:51] **Dan Phelps:** Where the Ark received the \$62 million junk bonds from, and this is the same little town not convenient to the interstate drivers that also sold them the 100 acres of land for \$1 and gave them \$175,000 cash when they were starting.

[00:57:11] **Ross Blocher:** So, they bend over backwards for him, and he just kind of throws them under the bus.

[00:57:14] **Dan Phelps:** I wrote an op ed—and I don't have it here in front of me any place, but I said, “That little town bent over backwards and forward.”

(*Ross cackles.*)

And the editor didn't catch that, and it went in the *Herald Reader*.

(They laugh.)

[00:57:27] **Ross Blocher:** Wow, that took me a second. Oh, well played there.

[00:57:30] **Dan Phelps:** I didn't say grabbed their ankles or anything, but.

(They laugh.)

[00:57:36] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, that's good. That's a good line. Oh my goodness And amazing that he would call the film “agenda-driven”, but I guess it takes one to know one.

[00:57:44] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, actually I thought the documentary was a little bit too fair towards them. They let them speak at length about their own beliefs, and it really showed what talented people he has working for him as far as the construction of the exhibits goes.

[00:57:57] **Ross Blocher:** I always appreciate when a documentary can allow for the good points, the salient points, and kind of let them hoist themselves on their own petards.

[00:58:07] **Dan Phelps:** Exactly, the bad things that were said—that were far worse than what I said—was what people that were employed by Ken Ham himself in that documentary.

[00:58:15] **Ross Blocher:** Returning to an earlier conversation point, I was just curious—because you were mentioning how it can be a futile effort to engage in debate with any of these people they put forward, and I get that. And I've heard arguments on both sides. You know, the other argument being just, you know, take any opportunity you can to communicate science and hope that some people on the fence will hear that. How did you feel about Bill Nye doing a debate with Ken Ham and then a follow up visit to the Ark?

[00:58:42] **Dan Phelps:** Well, I don't think he should have done it. On the other hand, I think Bill Nye did a wonderful job. He was prepared for all of Ken Ham's pseudo reasoning and pseudoscience and nonscience. He did a great job, but the very fact that he appeared opposite him gave him credibility. To this day—what year was that? 2014? It's nine years later, and Ken Ham will still start out blog posts that says, “Well, I remember when I was debating Bill Nye—” And you'd think it happened last week, but the guy is still talking about it.

[00:59:17] **Ross Blocher:** They have a whole display up on the third floor where they're playing that piece of that debate on loop, and then Ken Ham gets his little extra word in edgewise.

[00:59:26] **Dan Phelps:** Oh, they've written—not only do they sell DVDs of the thing, they have a very thick book—I can't remember the exact title—where they go through and analyze every word that Bill Nye said. And apparently they've sold this book. I've seen it in used bookstores; I've yet to buy it. *(Chuckles.)*

[00:59:44] **Ross Blocher:** Wow, that is a sincere form of flattery.

[00:59:47] **Dan Phelps:** But they go through and parse almost every sentence the man said.

(*Ross “wow”s.*)

Bill Nye, he—like I said, I don't think he should have agreed to do it. But once he did it, he did a good job. And I know he did some good things afterwards with the money he got for participating, but I can't talk very much about who got some of the money, but it was a very nice thing he did. So, a lot of people on our side will bash Bill Nye. And I sort of do, just for the fact that he participated. But again, he did a good job.

[01:00:18] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. Oh, I think that's a fair assessment. Yeah, another thing I noticed—this is apropos of nothing, but another thing I noticed on the Ark was that there were a lot of Mennonites there, people who at least were kind of dressed in that. Do you have any idea kind of what brings them in?

[01:00:31] **Dan Phelps:** Uh, I noticed that both at the Ark and Creation Museum, you see all the women with the ankle-length dresses and the thing that looks like an air filter on their head. They're very nice people. I mean, I run into them in Goodwill stores here in Kentucky all the time, you know. It's something they believe, and they're spending the money with Ken Ham.

It's interesting, a lot of the groups that are actually sending people to the Ark don't realize that the Ark has put out information calling a lot of different sects of Christians heretics and claiming that they're—they do things against the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, which were some of the creators of basic creation science to begin with, back in the 1920s.

(*Ross “wow”s.*)

They criticize all these groups and call them cults, but they criticize every group that is not a fundamentalist, biblical literalist of the most extreme type.

[01:01:30] **Ross Blocher:** I don't think Ken Ham ever saw a line in the sand he didn't like.

[01:01:33] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, and there was a post by Bodie Hodge. He was Ken Ham's—he is Ken Ham's son in law. And gosh, I'm not sure I could find it. I have so many pictures in my—but there was a whole list of groups that—oh, here it is! He posted this thing called “Sexual Humanism” to the Ark—or excuse me, the Answers in Genesis website. He included this chart. It says, “God's religion, Biblical Christianity, 66 books of the Bible—” Of course, Catholics don't have that same number. “Versus not God's religion, man's religion/humanism.” And under the humanism thing, there's all these counterfeits of biblical Christianity, and the list is hilarious. It includes Islam, Judaism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Deism, Satanism, Freemasonry, the Moonies, the Seventh Day Adventist, Roman Catholic.

(*Ross “wow”s.*)

I mean, it's a whole list, a laundry list of people they despise. And they also have on there Eastern Mysticism, Hinduism, and Taoism, and various New Age stuff.

[01:02:40] **Ross Blocher:** Boy, that makes it real hard when you're trying to draw in enough people to hit 2.2 million a year.

[01:02:44] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah. This is just an incredible diagram, and of course they're getting tax money. That's the really infuriating thing is they really despise all of these other groups in spite of all the tax money they're getting off of them. I wish there was a way we could somehow reopen the lawsuit or something, but I don't know if there's any possible way it could ever be appealed or anything like that. It's just so sad. This group, their statement of faith that they require people to sign before they work rules out all but the most extreme Christians. Even if they're just doing like a kitchen job or a janitor. I can understand them not wanting a non-creationist in the in the leadership or any of their staff.

[01:03:26] **Ross Blocher:** Right, or answering the phones or something. But yeah, at least you can have people do other jobs for sure. Yeah, that should have been pretty open and shut.

[01:03:34] **Dan Phelps:** They spend a lot of their time on their social message, too. They are obsessed with gays and transsexuals, and they spend a ton of time talking about that. This last January, they actually had this guy come in from Arizona. His name was—he was Reverend or Pastor Jeff Durbin. And he was sponsoring an anti-abortion legislation where—and it doesn't matter how you feel about abortion, the Creation Museum hosted this thing that was specifically on a piece of legislation that was going to appear before the legislature.

[01:04:12] **Ross Blocher:** So, it's making political statements like churches are not supposed to.

[01:04:17] **Dan Phelps:** Exactly, they get the 501c tax break, but yet they brought in this political group that was putting forward a piece of legislation that would have charged women and abortionists with murder. Not just banning that but actually charging them with murder.

[01:04:33] **Ross Blocher:** (*Sighs heavily.*) Oh my goodness.

[01:04:34] **Dan Phelps:** And this was a formal event at the Creation Museum. And I don't see how they could legally do this in light of their 501c. I put together an op ed and put it in the *Herald Leader*. It was responded to by one of their people, Mark Looy. Like their equivalent of Baghdad Bob. He's the guy that always responds if you write a letter to the editor.

Looy basically agreed with everything I said, and then said I was wrong. (*Chuckling.*) It was really a bizarre response.

[01:05:05] **Ross Blocher:** Woah! Okay! Well, you make this good point, and you know, agree with you there. But overall, you're wrong.

Wait, which part was wrong?

[01:05:11] **Dan Phelps:** But he brought in a legislator from Western Kentucky, Jefferson County near Louisville, rural area south of Louisville, that sponsored this bill. And they had this big rally in relation to it.

[01:05:24] **Ross Blocher:** I believe it, because when I was there—like the final day, they had this big American Campfire Revival with Kirk Cameron, and they had this big worship service outdoors. And there was this pastor who just had this fiery anti-abortion speech, and they were featuring this other organization. I don't recall them mentioning any legislation at that particular point, but they certainly made their stance clear.

[01:05:47] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah. It's so frustrating too.

[01:05:50] **Ross Blocher:** Man, you've been working hard. You're writing all these op eds, you're bringing this to light. Would you say you are the biggest thorn in Ken Ham's side, or are there other thorns working alongside you?

[01:06:00] **Dan Phelps:** Well, I'd say there's other thorns out there, but he has gotten so he doesn't mention anybody in opposition by name. I noticed one of the talks he gave after this anti-abortion rally, he mentioned a local secularist—even though I'm not really a religious believer, I've never publicly stated my religious beliefs that he could call me an atheist or anything else.

[01:06:23] **Ross Blocher:** Interesting. Okay.

[01:06:24] **Dan Phelps:** And he calls me a secularist, which I sort of like. That's a good...

[01:06:28] **Ross Blocher:** Fair characterization.

[01:06:30] **Dan Phelps:** But he never mentions me by name anymore, which I love. It's like he is hoping that I'm out for attention, and I'm not. I'm out to defeat them and put them out of business eventually on legal grounds.

[01:06:42] **Ross Blocher:** I wonder if that's why that blog post isn't active, at least as far as I could see looking through his archives.

[01:06:47] **Dan Phelps:** I'm gonna have to look that up when we get off here, because I'm disappointed that I'm not on there! I think I have a copy of it someplace, but. (*Laughs.*)

[01:06:54] **Ross Blocher:** I can point you at the Internet Archive if nothing else, but yeah, on his list of blogs, it doesn't show up where it originally was in 2013.

[01:07:03] **Dan Phelps:** I usually just Google “who is Dan Phelps” when I'm trying to find it.

[01:07:07] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, man. I mean, on one hand, that's clever of him not to give oxygen to the opposition, so to speak. But my goodness, I—

[01:07:15] **Dan Phelps:** I've been accused of giving oxygen to him. So, that's another problem is that anytime (*inaudible*) anybody like that it might give them free publicity, and they might use what you say in a fundraiser. Like, this could potentially end up in one of their fundraisers or something. Who knows?

[01:07:30] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. Like I was saying earlier, right, their pull quote later might be, "Ken Ham is brilliant." (*Chuckles.*)

[01:07:35] **Dan Phelps:** Like a movie review where they take all the words out of context.

[01:07:39] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. There's a great joke that Emo Philips, the comedian, said that he wants to do a live show where he does nothing but push bolts into plates of steel for two hours, and he defies anybody to write a review that does not include the word riveting.

(*They laugh.*)

[01:08:00] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, speaking of some of the political things, they're going to have a rally. They're sponsoring a group. Oh shoot, I can't think of the name of them. It's located in Moscow, Idaho. They're coming to the Ark. It's like a very ultra conservative men's group. It's coming to the Ark. It's called the Fight Laugh Feast group.

[01:08:21] **Ross Blocher:** Fight Laugh Feast group. Okay, that's a weird name.

[01:08:25] **Dan Phelps:** And apparently they're a bunch of fundamentalist Christians that like to smoke cigars and drink alcohol as well. And you know, there are fundamentalists like Lutherans, conservative Lutherans, that are some of the best beer makers in the world. But this is a little bit unusual for Ken Ham's crowd. But they're going to have a thing at the Ark. It's called The Politics of Six Day Creation. It's going to be at the Ark, October 11th to 14th. They're having their national conference there. I've looked at some of their videos online, and they are the most—(*sighs*) I'm trying to be polite, but I really can't. They're just the American Taliban. I mean, for lack of a better word,

[01:09:04] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. Wow, okay!

[01:09:05] **Dan Phelps:** I mean, these guys all look like the stereotype of a gun toting redneck "make America great again" type.

[01:09:14] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. Well, jeez, I guess maybe I need to head back with Carrie and visit again.

[01:09:18] **Dan Phelps:** Body armor—get your body armor! (*Laughs.*)

[01:09:20] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. Oh my goodness. That's wild. Well, I see this as an uphill battle, a Sisyphean effort. You know, you keep drawing attention to this. You've said that you would like to have more help in this effort. What can people do—you know, people who are

maybe listening to this from other parts of the country or the world—what can they do to kind of help?

[01:09:40] **Dan Phelps:** Well, I do all this out of my own pocket, so I would just like volunteer help. Somebody that's good at public records searches, an attorney that would be willing to maybe find databases that I don't have access to. Back when I was denied the public records request, I could have gone to court and appealed it, but I would have—I tried to get local attorneys. I went through the local ACLU, and everybody had too many pro bono cases. And I sort of regret now that I didn't go to court and represent myself. I mean, the person—what's the old saying? That the person that represents himself in court has a fool for a client.

(Ross laughs and affirms.)

But I'd probably would have been better off if it had been humiliating. It still wouldn't have been any worse than not getting the information I was trying to get.

[01:10:26] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. Well, they can appreciate David vs. Goliath, right? Well, hey, if we've got listeners in the area who can help out, contact info at OhNoPodcast.com, and we'll put you in communication with Dan.

[01:10:38] **Dan Phelps:** Oh, that'd be wonderful. Also, I recommend several blogs. My favorite, of course, that I usually publish on is The Panda's Thumb. You can search some of my blogs about the Ark Park on there, some of the different things they've done in recent years.

[01:10:55] **Ross Blocher:** In reference to that famous creationist textbook that they changed the words on to make it into an intelligent design textbook.

[01:11:04] **Dan Phelps:** Right, right. They used to mainly concentrate on intelligent design, but now they do a little bit of everything.

[01:11:10] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. Yeah, Carrie got me a copy of that Panda's Thumb textbook. That's a good name for the blog.

[01:11:14] **Dan Phelps:** There's another one besides Panda's Thumb that's run by a husband and wife that work at University of Dayton up in Ohio, William and Susan Trollinger, and their blog is named Righting America, R-I-G-H-T, Righting America. And they've written a book called *Righting America at the Creation Museum*. It's a scholarly look at the Creation Museum and all the signs and all they put up.

[01:11:39] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, wow. Okay. That's great.

[01:11:40] **Dan Phelps:** Well worth reading, lots—tons of footnotes, but they occasionally will post things, especially about social issues, that—The Panda's Thumb doesn't like for me to sometimes bring up some of the crazy social issues that the creationists at Answers in

Genesis do. So, Trollinger is much more accommodating as far as that. And of course, PZ Myers's blog. He will sometimes post things that have been rejected by Panda's Thumb.

[01:12:08] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, okay. That's Pharyngula?

[01:12:10] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, yeah, that's one of my favorites, and PZ is always willing to publish things that nobody else will for me.

[01:12:18] **Ross Blocher:** Very good. And you also mentioned the documentary *We Believe in Dinosaurs*. That's another place people can—

[01:12:24] **Dan Phelps:** That's right, you can get that on most online streaming services. If you want the CD, I think Amazon has it down to like \$15 or \$16. Or you can rent it. You can just rent it for like four dollars, so.

[01:12:36] **Ross Blocher:** On streaming. Yeah. Excellent.

[01:12:37] **Dan Phelps:** Right. And if you're a PBS Passport member, if you've donated to your local PBS station, you can probably watch it for free—a slightly edited version that appeared on the PBS series *Independent Lens*. It was an episode of *Independent Lens*. They took about 10 minutes out of it. Most of what they took out I didn't mind them taking out, because it was me in very grubby situations looking for fossils.

(*They chuckle.*)

[01:13:01] **Ross Blocher:** Okay. Oh, wild. Excellent recommendations. And another thing I'll ask, because we had people from Kentucky say, “Hey, there's other great things in Kentucky besides, you know, this kind of right-wing museum.” Can you give us any good recommendations? If someone were in Kentucky, where should they actually go to get some good signs?

[01:13:18] **Dan Phelps:** Well, unfortunately, we don't have a natural history museum in the state. That's the only reason I ever buy a lottery ticket. I know the odds are 300 million against me, but it's the only way. We've talked about having a natural history museum in the state since the 1980s.

(*Ross “wow”s.*)

And we've never raised the first penny. We have all these great ideas, people at the Kentucky Academy of Sciences, several other geologists and paleontology types. We've talked about it for years. You have to leave the state and go to the Cincinnati Museum Center to see a real history museum in the region. We also have a nice little museum that's temporarily closed for renovation, but it's also out of state at Parksville, Indiana—the Falls of Ohio. You can see the wonderful Devonian Age fossil beds there.

[01:14:02] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, excellent.

[01:14:03] **Dan Phelps:** If you want to stay in state, you pretty much have to go to Mammoth Cave.

[01:14:06] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah. I've heard about Mammoth Cave.

[01:14:07] **Dan Phelps:** Our (*inaudible*) meetings that I run every month, and we get to go on a field trip usually the next day. So, we have different fossil collecting trips, but we really lack a natural history museum. We even had a planetarium down at Eastern Kentucky University, a world-class planetarium. And they closed it during covid, and it's still closed. They took all the money and put it into the football program.

[01:14:32] **Ross Blocher:** Aw, man! (*Sighs.*) Well, next time I'm in Kentucky, I'm definitely visiting Mammoth Cave National Park. Uh, well. Boy, it sounds like it's an ongoing fight. It doesn't sound like it's ending anytime soon, so uh—

[01:14:46] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, I'm sorry to say that it might get far worse if we get this ultra conservative governor after the November election. This guy, he has visited the Ark, and like I said, I had all the information request problems with him, open records request problems with him.

[01:15:02] **Ross Blocher:** And boy, in the Senate you have Mitch McConnell and—

[01:15:07] **Dan Phelps:** Rand Paul.

[01:15:09] **Ross Blocher:** Rand Paul. Yep. Have you ever heard of them visiting the Ark?

[01:15:12] **Dan Phelps:** Not those two, but there's a whole laundry list of other people that have visited the Ark, including Thomas Massie, the congressman. A man that actually has a degree from MIT in engineering.

(*Ross sighs dejectedly.*)

He actually has visited the Ark. Jimmy Carter visited the Ark, but it was mainly because the guy that helped build the Ark was very prominent in Habitat for Humanity. I don't really blame Jimmy Carter that much for that.

[01:15:42] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, alright. We'll give him a pass.

[01:15:43] **Dan Phelps:** Several former governors, the Attorney General.

[01:15:47] **Ross Blocher:** There's been some VIPs.

[01:15:49] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, I'm trying to think. There's just so many things going on; it gets so difficult. There's several other senators—not senators, but congressmen—(*inaudible*) down in Louisiana, is a big Ark supporter. They will have these conferences where they'll bring in various right wing political people, like Tony Perkins.

[01:16:05] **Ross Blocher:** Oh, I recognize the name.

[01:16:06] **Dan Phelps:** He's like at the Family Resource Council or something like that.

[01:16:11] **Ross Blocher:** That's right. Okay.

[01:16:12] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, and he's an extremely far right preacher that has a lot to do with politics, but he appears at the Ark. One thing I didn't mention is they have a new carousel ride that opens—

[01:16:24] **Ross Blocher:** Yes! Oh yeah!

[01:16:25] **Dan Phelps:** You can ride a dinosaur or a pterodactyl or totally extinct mammals in the most boring carousel you've ever seen though. You'd think it'd be cool with all the different animals they have.

[01:16:35] **Ross Blocher:** At least, I hear it's ADA accessible for people in wheelchairs. That's good.

[01:16:39] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, they run it really slow, so it's not much fun as the pictures I've got. But you can find pictures of Ken Ham riding—I think he was on the Pterodactyl. I can't remember precisely.

[01:16:50] **Ross Blocher:** Amazing. Yeah, that was still a work in progress when I visited, so. Okay.

[01:16:55] **Dan Phelps:** But again, where is the money coming from where they were able to—they imported this thing all the way from Italy and built a special building. They also have a 4D—what they call a 4D virtual reality show.

[01:17:07] **Ross Blocher:** Oh yeah, I got to go on that. And it was—I gotta say, it was pretty well done.

[01:17:10] **Dan Phelps:** Yeah, yeah, they spend the money, and they don't do second rate stuff. And that will be quoted in the review too.

(They laugh.)

[01:17:16] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, exactly. The brilliant Ken Ham doesn't do second rate. Oh, goodness. This is, again, apropos of nothing, but you're not related to any other famous Phelps, are you? Like Fred Phelps or Mihcael Phelps?

[01:17:31] **Dan Phelps:** At least people started calling me Phelps instead of Phillips after Michael Phelps, the swimmer, became famous. The other—Fred Phelps, the redneck—

[01:17:41] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, Westboro Baptist Church. Bad guy.

[01:17:42] **Dan Phelps:** Hate creature, for lack of a better term, was from Missouri. And I think some of the Phelpses here in Kentucky—my relative's ancestors came over here in the 1790s with people affiliated with Daniel Boone after the—about the same time Kentucky became a state. But some of them left for Missouri in the 1820s. And I think that—

[01:18:03] **Ross Blocher:** So, maybe distantly related then.

[01:18:05] **Dan Phelps:** He's probably a distant cousin. So, hopefully very—hopefully, very, very distant.

[01:18:10] **Ross Blocher:** Yeah, no kidding! Well, he's gone now. He can't hurt people anymore. Goodness.

[01:18:15] **Dan Phelps:** God hates Phelpses.

(They laugh.)

[01:18:19] **Ross Blocher:** Not doing him any favors. Well, Dan, we appreciate your work, the op eds you write, the court cases you start, the raking that you muck. It's all very helpful in countering the work that Ken Ham is doing. So, thank you so much. And hopefully, you can get some assistance there.

[01:18:36] **Dan Phelps:** Oh, I sure appreciate being on here. Thank you. I always like to get the word out.

[01:18:40] **Ross Blocher:** Fantastic.

Alright. Well, thanks again to Dan Phelps for coming on the show. It was so exciting to talk with him and get some more behind the scenes info about all of these Ark Encounter related topics, especially after having been there myself. If you happen to be in the Los Angeles area, Dan will be giving a talk at the Center for Inquiry West—that's right, the place where Carrie and I originally met each other—on Sunday, October 22nd at 11AM. He'll be giving a talk based on all the topics we were discussing today, but this time there will be visuals. So, I hope to see you there. If you see me there, say hi!

Also, we mentioned a few different articles, and Dan sent me a lot of fun follow up links after our conversation. So, keep an eye on the ONRAC Facebook page. That's just [Facebook.com/onrac](https://www.facebook.com/onrac). We'll be sharing some of those articles over the coming week. Otherwise, that's it for our show. Our theme music is by Brian Keith Dalton. Our administrative manager is Ian Kremer. You can support this podcast at [MaximumFun.org/join](https://www.MaximumFun.org/join). That's how you become part of the family. That's how you support us on a monthly basis and make this podcast possible. Pod-sible. Thank you so much to everybody who supports us. And you can also support us by leaving a positive review, telling a friend, all of those things help this podcast grow and hopefully keep too many people from going to the Ark Encounter in Kentucky. And remember!

[01:20:12] **Clip:**

Speaker: Well, one thing I've found is sometimes if you don't do it, nobody else will. So, step forward and get involved. Learn to be a troublemaker.

[01:20:20] **Music:** “Oh No, Ross and Carrie! Theme Song” by Brian Keith Dalton. A jaunty, upbeat instrumental.

[01:20:33] **Promo:**

Music: Thumpy synth.

Jesse Thorn: I'm Jesse Thorn. *Bullseye* is celebrating 50 years of hip-hop by bringing you an entire month of brand-new interviews with rappers. That means Jeezy.

Jeezy: I put my pain in the music.

Jesse Thorn: Angie Stone.

Angie Stone: You know, hip-hops—we called them hops back then.

Jesse Thorn: Master P.

Master P: Music is what's gonna open the doors for us. But whatever we come up with after this, it's gonna be bigger.

Jesse Thorn: Plus, CHIKA, Saba, even the greatest of them all: Rakim. That's this September. Open up that podcast app. Type in *Bullseye* and hit subscribe. You're not gonna wanna miss any of this.

(Music fades out.)

[01:21:16] **Sound Effect:** Cheerful ukulele chord.

[01:21:17] **Speaker 1:** Maximum Fun.

[01:21:18] **Speaker 2:** A worker-owned network.

[01:21:20] **Speaker 3:** Of artist owned shows.

[01:21:21] **Speaker 4:** Supported—

[01:21:22] **Speaker 5:** —directly—

[01:21:23] **Speaker 6:** —by you!