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### **Villainy Behind the Mask of Virtue: Vision Forum Unmasked**

The man behind the San Antonio Independent Christian Film Festival, a project of Vision Forum Ministries that is supposedly “taking dominion for Christ in film,” owes homeschoolers all across the country an apology for violating their trust.

Vision Forum’s first film, *Raising the Allosaur*, is Phillips’ main credential for being a film festival sponsor and judge, all the while grossly violating #8 & #9 of his own 10 commandments for entering a film in his festival. Respectively they state: “Don’t steal other people’s work” and “Truth is essential to Christian films.” Doug Phillips calls his film a documentary, but it is misleading and grossly misrepresents the truth and steals from the hard work of others. The promotions and the jacket on the film itself begin the lying in order to sensationalize Phillips claims. In order to exercise his so-called “dominion,” Phillips has unethically stepped on the heads of several other Christian creation ministries and individuals, employing threats of legal action, making accusations and through innuendo.

This debacle surrounds an allosaurus story that Wendy Rigby of KENS TV first reported on two years ago. The film *Raising the Allosaur* catapulted the financially troubled Vision Forum into the lucrative market of films and dinosaur digs, offering outings for those that can afford \$999/person among the homeschool community. Rigby’s story put Phillips on the media map—a huge benefit to the struggling outfit—but unfortunately (through no fault of Ms. Rigby) was highly misleading.

Phillips’ Vision Forum was over a million dollars in the red, according to a Dunn & Bradstreet report when Phillips met the Peter DeRosa family, which Phillips features in his film. Doug Phillips’ involvement with the *Allosaur* has been immersed in duplicity, slanderous lies, murky dealings and divisiveness.

In short, the controversy surrounds the excavation of an allosaurus discovered in northwest Colorado by landowner, Dana Forbes. Forbes, who originally found the allosaur in October, 2000 and is featured in the beginning of Doug Phillips’ film, was not given credit for the discovery. The Forbes abandoned both their land, and their dream of blessing the creation community through tours and scientific studies on the land, because of the deceitful actions of Doug Phillips.

Vision Forum deceived and bullied many parties involved in order to profit from the exciting discovery. Chief among them is Joe Taylor, who owns perhaps the largest creation fossil museum in the world, which is located in Crosbyton, Texas. Taylor, the lead site manager for the allosaur excavation, is not featured in Phillips’ film at all. Most of the allosaur featured in Phillips film was removed, plaster cast and sent to Taylor’s Mt. Blanco Fossil Museum in September of 2001.

Tom DeRosa, president of Creation Studies Institute and Mike Zovath, field representative for Answers In Genesis were part of the original dig. When the Vision Forum group came to the Forbes property in May of 2002 to film *Raising the Allosaur* over four partial days of digging, all that was left of the allosaur was the end of the tail, which had been plaster cast the year before to protect it from erosion.

By the time the Vision Forum group (composed primarily of homeschool families that paid \$999.00 per person) had departed, the skull had not yet been found. This is why there is no footage of it being excavated in the film.

Based on notes which Taylor had made and shared of where the skull would likely be located if it had not eroded away, the Vision Forum group exposed a bit more bone. Dr. Bruce Bellamy, given credit in Phillips' film for finding the skull, did in fact dig where he was told to and found the first articulated neck bone. But the Bellamy family has told witnesses that they tried to tell Phillips they didn't find the skull as stated in the movie. At the time of this dig, Phillips and his tour group had no idea what it was that they had found. Others present concur.

Taylor's professional excavation crew came in after Phillips' tour group left and a member of Taylor's crew, homeschooler Jordan Hall, digging in the company of other Mt. Blanco team members, Phillip Hall, Don Yaeger, Dave Babbit, Chantell Lines, the Forbes family and others, actually found the skull after several days of digging. Along with the rest of the bones, the skull was field-jacketed and taken to the Mt. Blanco Fossil Museum. Subsequently legal demands and threats were made against Taylor to surrender the bones. Under threat of a lawsuit, and believing it wrong to sue a brother, Taylor reluctantly let them have it. The bones were taken to a makeshift "lab" owned by Doug Phillips.

Consequently, Taylor suffered devastating financial losses and has had to shut his museum down several times as well as sell his museum displays just to survive. Answers In Genesis Ministries and Creation Studies Institute have supported Taylor and tried to help him survive. Friends of Taylor agree that he suffered extreme financial and emotional hardships due to the self-serving actions of Doug Phillips. Phillips even used his Internet site to intimidate Taylor, calling him an enemy of homeschoolers and accusing him of persecuting the DeRosa paleo "prodigies" and being a greedy and jealous man. But these comments are contradicted by statements from many witnesses who were there.

The lies, misrepresentations and fraud surrounding the making of *Raising the Allosaur* instead raise serious questions about the character and integrity of Doug Phillips, who claims to be the "moral voice" of some 600,000 homeschoolers across the country. The Vision Forum website showcases Doug Phillips and his family as at the forefront of "taking dominion for Christ." However, Doug Phillips appears to be far from the man he purports himself to be. Behind his mask of virtue hides a mean-spirited, dishonest man who uses his legal skills to bully those that dare to get in his way. Doug Phillips has always been right there with his legal team to protect these matters from coming to light, thus preserving their bad character as well as his lucrative "documentary."

In a few days the faithful will gather at the San Antonio Independent Christian Film Festival to hobnob with some of the most well-known Christian film makers around, and Doug Phillips will be basking in glory and hyping his fraudulent film. On the *Raising the Allosaur* film jacket, Phillips states "What happens when a group of home school boys and girls travel to the badlands of Colorado with their parents in search of adventure and the hope of finding ancient treasures buried in rock? They make the biggest dinosaur discovery of the year...They raise from the ground what appears to be the most complete Allosaur ever found in the history of paleontology, including the monster's giant skull complete with rows and rows of once-razor sharp teeth." However, one might better ask, "What happens when a supposed moral leader resorts to deception, fraud, threats and strong-arm tactics to deny others their rights and to produce a film that is full of half-truths and outright lies?"

Many in the Christian and homeschooling communities would like answers to this and a host of other questions surrounding this story. They would like to see this situation investigated and proper restitution given to the victims. It remains to be seen how much longer the Christian community will allow itself to continue to be duped by Doug Phillips, but it would only add insult to injury if *Raising the Allosaur* brought further fame and fortune to a man who seems devoid of conscience through the San Antonio Independent Christian Film Festival.