JANUARY 2, 2011 THESKEPTICARENA.COM

TODAY'S SHOW IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT. I USUALLY DO MY OWN DEBATES, BUT OCCASIONALLY I COME ACROSS A DECONSTRUCTION, SO WELL DONE, THAT THERE IS NOTHING MORE I CAN ADD TO IT. SO I AM SIMPLY GOING TO READ IT AS I FOUND IT ON THE WEB.

JOSH BRECHEEN WAS ELECTED STATE SENATOR FOR OKLAHOMA IN 2010.

HE WROTE AN ARTICLE WHICH HAS BEEN RESPONDED TO BY BIOLOGY PROFESSOR P.Z. MYERS WHO TEACHES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA AT MORRIS.

HERE IS PROFESSOR P.Z. MYER'S INTRODUCTION TO BRECHEEN'S ARTICLE:

He's a new legislator who has announced his intention to introduce creationism into Oklahoma schools for a set of reasons he laid out in a notably ignorant column in the Durant Daily Democrat.

His column is amazing. The faculty of Southeastern Oklahoma State University are covering their eyes in shame right now, since apparently this creationist-cliche-spewing plagiarist and professional goober managed to successfully graduate from their institution. My students ought to be worried, too, because now I feel like I've got to tighten up my standards and start flunking more students out lest they come back and haunt me from positions of power. Seriously, it's a remarkable work he's posted: it's largely cribbed from the creationist Lee Strobel, but at the same time, he's managed to make standard creationist arguments worse. Here's his whole column, with a little helpful annotation from me.

NOW, HERE IS THE ARTICLE ITSELF, INCLUDING COMMENTS FROM PROFESSOR P.Z. MYERS:

JOSH One of the bills I will file this year may be dismissed as inferior by "intellectuals"

PZ [It's not a promising beginning when you're discussing a scientific topic and immediately dismiss intellectuals]

JOSH so I wanted to devote particular time in discussing it's merits. It doesn't address state waste, economic development, workers comp reform or lawsuit reform (although I have filed bills concerning each

PZ [I dread learning about their quality, given the dreck espoused here]

JOSH but it is nonetheless worthy of consideration. It is an attempt to bring parity

PZ [a familiar refrain, in which a fringe belief is undeservedly promoted to equal time with well-established science]

JOSH to subject matter taught in our public schools, paid for by the taxpayers and driven by a religious ideology.

PZ [says the guy who wants to promote a religious ideology]

JOSH I'm talking about the religion of evolution

PZ [eyes roll everywhere].

JOSH Yes, it is a religion

PZ [No, it isn't].

JOSH The religion of evolution

PZ [Seriously. It isn't. It's a scientific theory that explains a large body of confirmable facts, and that provides a useful framework for new research. It has no resemblance to any faith of any kind.]

JOSH requires as much faith as the belief in a loving God,

PZ [God: no evidence, no math, no experiments, no observations. Evolution: evidence, math, experiments, observations. Case closed.]

JOSH when all the facts are considered (mainly the statistical impossibility of key factors)

PZ [Here comes the bad math].

JOSH Gasp! Someone reading this just fell out of their enlightened seat!!!

PZ [Only at the sight of three exclamation points…we're all wondering if he typed this while wearing his underpants on his head]

JOSH "It's not a religion as it's agreed upon by the entire scientific community," some are saying at this very moment

PZ [No, we're not, because its status as a science rather than a religion is determined by its properties, not some kind of consensus or vote].

JOSH Are you sure? Let's explore the facts.

PZ [As if Brecheen has any.]

JOSH As a high school and university student forced to learn about evolution

PZ [If only someone had forced him to learn about logic and grammar!]

JOSH I was never told there were credible scientists who harbor significant skepticism toward Darwinian Theory

PZ [Because there aren't any, at least not in the sense Brecheen is talking about. There are critics of aspects of the theory and differences in emphasis, but no credible, knowledgeable scientist has any doubts about the overall fact of evolution].

JOSH I easily recall a full semester at SOSU where my English 1 professor forced us to write

PZ [What we professors call "teaching", our dumber students call "forcing"]

JOSH almost every paper over the "facts" of evolution. That professor had a deep appreciation for me

PZ [Oh, really?]

JOSH by semester end due to our many respectful debates

PZ [In the classroom, professors tend to avoid expressing what they really think of some of the clowns in our student body. Don't mistake professionalism for intellectual respect]

JOSH as I chose to not be blindly led

PZ [Says the creationist].

JOSH I specifically remember asking how in 4,000 years of recorded history how we have yet to see the ongoing evidence of evolution

PZ [But we do! Bacterial resistance, new species, observations of changing frequencies of alleles, etc., etc., etc.]

JOSH (i.e. a monkey jumping out of a tree and putting on a business suit).

PZ [Jebus. What a maroon. No, evolution does not predict that monkeys will don business suits].

JOSH Following a 2001 PBS television series, which stressed the "fact" of evolution, approximately 100

PZ [100 fringe cranks out of a population of about a million scientists]

JOSH physicists, anthropologists, biologists, zoologists, organic chemists, geologists, astrophysicists and other scientists organized a rebuttal.

PZ [Don't forget the dentists! Relatively few on the "Dissent from Darwinism" list were actually qualified biologists, and quite a few have since been very surprised to learn that they were included]

JOSH So much disagreement arose from this one sided TV depiction that this group produced a 151 page rebuttal stating how the program, "failed to present accurately and fairly the scientific problems with the Darwinian evolution". These weren't narrow minded fundamentalists, backwoods professors or rabid religious radicals;

PZ [Actually, yeah, they were]

JOSH these were respected world class scientists like Nobel nominee

PZ [Anyone can be nominated, and nominations are supposed to be secret; why this is always cited as a qualification is mysterious]

JOSH Henry Schafer, the third most cited chemist

PZ [chemist, no expertise in biology]

JOSH in the world and Fred Figworth,

PZ [This is called a plagiarized error. Lee Strobel made this typo, and now it gets echoed in creationist rants everywhere. There is no Figworth at Yale; his name is Sigworth]

JOSH professor of cellular and molecular physiology at Yale Graduate School.

Ideologues teaching evolution as undisputed fact are not teaching truth

PZ [Yes, they are. Evolution is firmly established.].

JOSH Renowned

PZ [Fact not shown]

JOSH scientists now asserting that evolution is laden with errors are being ignored.

PZ [Also laughed at]

JOSH That's where we should have problems with state dollars only depicting one side of a multifaceted issue

PZ [Oklahoma: mountain state, archipelago, rain forest, or lunar mare? That's a multifaceted issue, too. Shall we teach invented geography with equal time?].

JOSH Using your tax dollars to teach the unknown, without disclosing the entire scientific findings is incomplete and unacceptable

PZ [OK, if we're to teach the complete story, we'll rightfully have to invest 179.99 days in teaching the scientific evidence, which all supports evolution, and 3 minutes on creationism on the last day. Fair's fair].

JOSH For years liberals have decried how they want to give students both sides of an argument so they can decide for themselves,

PZ [Both sides doesn't imply a body of evidence is equal to a body of myth and superstition]

JOSH however when it comes to evolution vs. creation in the classroom, the rules somehow change

PZ [Wrong. We're consistent: we want the scientific evidence taught. It's not our fault the creationists haven't provided any].

JOSH Their beliefs shift, may I say... evolve to suit their ideology. We must discuss the most recognizable icons of the evolution religion. Darwin sketched for The Origin of Species a visual

PZ [This one? Wrong. It's not in the Origin, it's in Darwin's notes, which I doubt that Brecheen has read. It also looks nothing like what he describes]

JOSH to explain his hypothesis that all living creatures evolved from a common ancestor. The tree of life scenario, engrained upon most of our memories,

PZ [What he's about to describe isn't the tree of life, and I don't know where he came up with it, but plucked from his ass seems a reasonable hypothesis]

JOSH depicts gue transitioning into a hunched over monkey which then turns into a business suit

PZ [What's with all the monkeys in business suits?].

JOSH Darwin himself knew the biggest problem with his visual (cornerstone concept of his hypothesis) was the fossil record itself. He acknowledged major groups of animals, he coined "divisions" (now called phyla) appear suddenly in the fossil record

PZ [Fair enough, Darwin does propose this as an issue, saying that there should have been long periods of time prior to the Cambrian, during which life swarmed in the seas. Of course, he's since been shown to have been right.].

JOSH The whole basis for evolution is gradual differences and changes to be confirmed by modified fossils (phyla cross-over).

PZ [What? Never heard of it].

JOSH Even Christians believe in biological change from species to species (adaption) over time. The taxonomic hierarchy which includes species, genus, family, order and class must be visualized

PZ [What?]

JOSH for understanding separation from phyla and species classifications. As an OSU Animal Science graduate

PZ [I'm so sorry, OSU]

JOSH I readily admit the adaption of animal species from interbreeding such as Santa Gertrudis cattle, a "weenie" dog or even a fruit fly. Even the difference among lions, tigers and cougars could be attributed to species adaption and interbreeding if one so decried [sic]. Additionally, human differences seen notable in ethnicity proves that change among species is real but this is NOT evolution,

PZ [No, it is evolution. You don't just get to define away obvious examples of changes over time as non-evolution]

JOSH its adaption. Changes with the classification of species is DRAMATICALLY different then changes among Phyla

PZ [Again, I say, what? I've been grading a lot of papers lately. I can tell when a student is trying to BS his way through a topic he doesn't understand, and Brecheen is showing all the signs].

JOSH Phyla changes would be if an insect, with its skeleton located on the outside of soft tissue (arthropods), transformed into a mammal, with its skeleton at the core of soft tissue (chordates)

PZ [Ah, so that's what he's getting at. An insect must turn into a mammal for evolution to be true. Sorry, guy, such a phenomenon would demonstrate that evolution was wrong — biologists make no such prediction].

JOSH Phyla changes must be verified for Darwin's common ancestor hypothesis to be accurate

PZ [Nope. This nonsense about "phyla changes" or "phyla cross-over" is simply stuff Brecheen has made up out of whole cloth (or stolen from one of his creationist sources). Real biologists argue that mammals and insects evolved from a common ancestor in the pre-Cambrian, which would have been a generalized worm-like creature. Organisms do not suddenly leap across lines of descent; it's like arguing that before you'll believe I'm descended from my grandmother, I have to give birth to my cousin].

JOSH The rapid appearance of today's known phylum-level differences, at about 540 million years ago, debunks the tree of life (common ancestor) scenario.

PZ [No, it doesn't.]

JOSH This biological big bang of fully developed

PZ [Nonsense. Cambrian organisms were precursors to modern forms, and the full range of extant forms was not present in the Cambrian—there were no bumblebees or birds, no squirrels or snakes.]

JOSH animal phyla is called the Cambrian explosion. The Cambrian explosion's phyla fossils and the phyla of today are basically one in the same

PZ [Nope. The Cambrian chordates, for instance, were represented only by small wormlike swimmers that were spineless and jawless and brainless; modern chordates are significantly more diverse. Mr Brecheen, for instance, possesses a jaw, although he may be lacking in some of the other key characteristics].

JOSH These phyla fossils of that era are fully developed,

PZ [What does that even mean? Of course they were functional organisms]

JOSH not in a transitional form

PZ ["Transition" refers to an intermediate between two forms. They were transitional between pre-Cambrian forms and modern chordates].

JOSH In fact we don't have a transitional form fossil

PZ [Of course we do.]

JOSH crossing phyla classification

PZ [Again with this bizarre "phyla crossing" nonsense. We expect no such thing]

JOSH after hundreds of years of research looking at sediment beds spanning the ages. There are certainly plenty of good sedimentary rocks from before the Cambrian era to have preserved ancestors if there are any.

PZ [Again, we do! We have fossils from the Vendian/Ediacaran; we have 600 million year old embryos; we have trace fossils and the small shelly fauna. Brecheen's ignorance is not evidence of absence]

JOSH As for pre-Cambrian fossils being too tiny or soft for secured preservation there are microfossils of bacteria in rocks dating back beyond three billion years.

PZ [As I just said, we've got 'em. They're worms and slugs and fans and weird quilted creatures]

JOSH Absolutely ZERO phyla evidence supporting Darwin's hypothesis has been discovered after millions of fossil discoveries.

PZ [Imagine Brecheen closing his eyes real tight right now, sticking his fingers in his ears, and going "lalalalala". What exactly did he learn in that OSU Animal Science program? It sure wasn't any basic biology]

JOSH Darwin's cornerstone hypothesis where invertebrate's transition into vertebrates is majorly lacking

PZ [No, it isn't. The molecular evidence is robust. Brecheen just doesn't understand it, or more likely, never saw it]

JOSH and so is Darwin's "theory". I will be introducing legislation this session to ensure our school children have all the facts.

PZ [So, Oklahoma, you elected this idiot to office. Are you going to stand by and watch him poison your educational system with this garbage?]

THE WEB SITE OF PROFESSOR MYERS IS:

http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/

(MUST BE LOWER CASE)

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

DNA TEST REVEALS THAT HITLER WAS JEWISH,

AND ALSO, PARTLY AFRICAN

ADOLF HITLER PROBABLY NEVER HAD A BAR MITZVAH OR ANYTHING, BUT A SERIES OF NEW DNA TESTS INDICATE THAT HE HAD JEWISH AND EVEN AFRICAN ANCESTORS. A JOURNALIST AND A HISTORIAN TRACKED DOWN 39 RELATIVES OF THE FUHRER AND PERFORMED DNA TESTS ON THEM. THEY FOUND A COMMON CHROMOSOME AMONG THEM, E1B1B1, THAT IS RARE IN WESTERN EUROPE, BUT COMMON IN MOROCCO, ALGERIA, AND TUNISIA, AND AMONG ASHKENAZI AND SEPHARDIC JEWS.

BELGIAN JOURNALIST, JEAN-PAUL MULDERS, WROTE IN A BELGIAN MAGAZINE “ONE CAN FROM THIS POSTULATE THAT HITLER WAS RELATED TO PEOPLE WHOM HE DESPISED." HITLER’S CONCERN OVER HIS DESCENT WAS NOT UNJUSTIFIED. HE WAS APPARENTLY NOT ‘PURE’ OR ‘ARYAN.” HISTORIANS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT HITLER MIGHT HAVE JEWISH ROOTS IN HIS PAST; HIS FATHER IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN THE ILLEGITIMATE SON OF A MAID AND A YOUNG JEWISH MAN.

(MY COMMENT: WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE TO BE ABLE TO WAKE THAT BASTARD UP FOR JUST 5 MINUTES AND WATCH HIS REACTION TO THE NEWS THAT HE IS A JEW? I CAN'T THINK OF ANY REVENGE THAT WOULD BE SWEETER THAN THAT.

WELL ACTUALLY, WHILE HE'S UP, WE COULD ALSO TELL HIM THAT CHRISTIANS ARE SO DESPERATE TO DISOWN HIM THAT MOST OF THEM ARE TRYING TO CLAIM HE WAS AN ATHEIST. KNOWING HOW MUCH HITLER HATED ATHEISTS, I THINK THAT WOULD PAY HIM BACK MORE THAN ANY TORTURE WE COULD EVER DEVISE).

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

FAMOUS QUOTES

STEPHEN F. ROBERTS

(I WAS UNABLE TO LOCATE ANY INFORMATION ON STEPHEN ROBERTS).

"I CONTEND WE ARE BOTH ATHEISTS,

I JUST BELIEVE IN ONE FEWER GOD THAN YOU DO.

WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND WHY YOU DISMISS ALL THE OTHER POSSIBLE GODS, THEN YOU WILL UNDERSTAND WHY I DISMISS YOURS."