

EDITORIAL: RM 2493 hoax still lives on_82304

August 20, 2004

Posted: 8/20/04

EDITORIAL: RM 2493 hoax still lives on

What do family-values patriarch James Dobson and the late atheist matriarch Madalyn Murray O'Hair have in common?

Somebody's used their names to perpetuate one of the nation's longest-running urban legends. For years, I thought well-meaning Christians kept this lunacy alive. But now I'm re-thinking that theory. This hoax has remained too robust for too long to be attributed to naivete or dumb luck. I'm beginning to think it's perpetuated by evil enemies of faith who prey on Christians who fear culture so badly they'll believe any scary tale.

For decades—even years after her death—a bogus memo claimed O'Hair was behind Federal Communications Commission Petition 2493, also often called RM 2493. The petition was supposed to be an attempt to get the FCC to remove the gospel from American radio and television.

Unlike O'Hair, the RM 2493 rumor refuses to die. Just last week, it circulated in an e-mail across Texas—and who knows where in cyberspace—once again.

“Help Dr. Dobson,” the e-mail pleaded. “An organization has been granted a Federal Hearing ... by the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, D.C. Their petition, Number 2493, would ultimately pave the

way to stop the reading of the gospel of our Lord and Savior on the airwaves of America. They got 287,000 signatures to back their stand! If this attempt is successful, all Sunday worship services being broadcast on the radio or by television will be stopped.”

The e-mail asks readers to attach their names to the e-mail and forward it to “everyone you think should read this.” The long list of names will “show that there are many Christians alive, well and concerned about our country.”

If you're concerned about our country, help stamp out this tired old rumor. Here's the truth:

RM 2493 was indeed filed with the FCC-30 years ago. In 1974, Jeremy Lansman and Lorenzo Milam asked the FCC to freeze licenses for new educational television and FM radio stations that were to air only religious or quasi-religious programs. Their request never would have eliminated religious broadcasting from stations that already had received broadcast licenses.

- ◆ FCC commissioners unanimously denied RM 2493-29 years ago. The FCC issued a statement Aug. 1, 1975, noting the First Amendment requires the commission “to observe a stance of neutrality toward religion, acting neither to promote nor inhibit religion.” So, religious stations and programming can flourish.

Unfortunately, this rumor isn't likely to fade away. So, save this editorial. And the next time you hear the number 2493, help spread the truth.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.