

# KTYM



## JOHN & VERMYA PHILLIPS - TRAILBLAZERS OF THE GOSPEL AIRWAYS

*By Opal Louis Nations*

*This year John and Vermya Phillips celebrate their 42nd year as co-announcers in gospel radio. As members of both the Gospel Announcers Guild (John is one of the founding members) affiliated with Rev. James Cleveland's Gospel Music Workshop of America and long-serving servants of the National Association of Radio Announcers, this husband and wife team have done great things to keep traditional gospel radio in Southern California alive and well.*

John Phillips was born in Ranger, East Texas on April 26, 1922. His father, Louis Phillips Sr., was deacon of the local Baptist church. The Phillipses were farmers who raised cotton, corn, water melon and cantaloupes. Bertha, John's mother, parted company with Louis Sr. when John was only four years old. From then on, John's was partially brought up by his step-mother. Vermya was born in Franklin, Texas and spent her school days in Calvert, a little ways south on Highway 6. She attended church in Waco where she sang in the Toliver Chapel Choir under the stewardship of Rev. O.L. Hegman. Hegman, much to his joy, found he was blessed with an abundance of strong female singers. Taking eight of his best, Hegman formed The Toliver-ettes. Vermya was one of the chosen few to sing in the group who, for the most part, sang at local engagements and church functions.

John moved to Los Angeles, CA in 1940. In 1942, he joined the Army and served in the 530 Quartermaster Unit. The army took him to England, France, Germany, Italy and finally, North Africa. He quit the Army in 1945 and started taking an interest in music. In 1946, he set himself up as a mobile disc jockey with turntables and a couple of large speakers stuffed in the trunk of his car. John put on record parties, first at a sorority club on Sugar Hill, then he bought time at The Downbeat, Last Word, Cotton Club and Club Alabam. He also m.c.'d a show at the Lincoln Garden alongside blues pianist J.D. Nicholson. John played all types of popular African American music.

Vermya moved to Los Angeles in 1955 where she met and soon married John Phillips, who at this point had crossed over to programming strictly gospel music. In 1957, John and Vermya were hired by KTYM (469 a.m.) as church announcers. Pretty soon they were hosting a gospel program called "Moments of Decision" which aired on Sundays between 6 and 7:30 p.m. Vermya possesses a fine strong soprano voice with wide range and stunning vibrato. In 1958, she cut the first of many recordings ("Moments of Meditation") for Dunlap Cawthorn's tiny Creadence label. This is followed by a second Creadence outing in 1960.

For a brief period during the 1960's, the couple switched to KFOX f.m. 100.3. On KFOX John did all the engineering while Vermya played the records. They kept the name "Moments of Decision" but broadcast earlier and longer, 5 a.m. through 3 p.m. on Sundays. It was during this time that Vermya, while working as a teacher for the Compton Unified School District, recorded some excellent gospel sides with the recently deceased Dave Weston and his Weston Singers, a group very much in the Sallie Martin Singers vein.

In 1970, John and Vermya took "Moments of Decision" to KKGQ f.m. 105 where they stayed for fifteen years. IN 1978, Vermya came out with her first gospel CD. In 1985, the husband and wife team switched back to KTYM in Inglewood where they re-



*Spreading the gospel on the airwaves*

main to this day on the a.m. dial. Show time is every Saturday 6:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Last year, Mel Alexander at Kris records issued a Vermya Phillips CD entitled "You can't replace God for man." The lineup includes four recent songs, accompaniment by The Gospel Reeds or just plain Piano, plus half a dozen selections obviously cut during the 1960's, with and without the magnificent Weston Singers. It is on these vocal group sides that one gets to hear the beauty and grace of Vermya H. Phillips incomparable voice.

Today, Vermya exercises her singing talent with the Sanctuary Choir of the Trinity Baptist Church pastored by Rev. Alvin Tunstill. May John and Vermya continue to light up the gospel airwaves for many more years.



**John & Vermya Phillips**

KTYM 1460 AM RADIO  
SATs 6:30 AM

*with Gospel Music and Moments of Decision*

**J. & V. Promotions**

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**JOHN & VERMYA PHILLIPS**

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MOMENTS of DECISION — *Spiritual Gospel Songs*

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