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1 cassette tape

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Dated at Bowling Green this 18th day of September, 19 88.

WITNESS/
INTERVIEWER [Signature]
(signature)

2130A Stratford Ct

Bowling Green, KY
(address)

DONOR(S), INFORMANT(S), OR INTERVIEWEE(S):

[Signature]
(signature)

(signature)

448 Webb Ave.
Bowling Green, KY
(address)

Accepted for the Department of Library Special Collections by:

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
Library Special Collections
Western Kentucky University

10

NARRATOR/INTERVIEWER DATA FORM

I. NARRATOR

John Edmonds

NAME (Include fullest possible name--first, middle and/or maiden, last. For example:
John James Smith; Mary Franklin Smith (Mrs. John Smith))

448 Webb Avenue, Bowling Green, Ky 42101
ADDRESS

PERSONAL DATA (optional)

Age: 43 Date of Birth: 03/02/45 Place of Birth: Bowling Green Sex: M

RACE/NATIONALITY/ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Black

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: (Include education, occupation, places of residence, religion,
etc.)

Graduated from High Street School in Bowling Green, studied English at
Western Kentucky University for three years, has lived in Nashville
and Los Angeles

II. INTERVIEWER

Juanne Beth Cervelli

NAME (Include fullest possible name as described above)

2130A Stonebrook Court, Bowling Green, KY 42101
ADDRESS, LOCAL

ADDRESS, PERMANENT

None

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE NARRATOR, SUCH AS COUSIN, FRIEND, BOSS,
ACQUAINTANCE, NONE, ETC.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

comment on pronunciations, meanings - spell out names if
confusion possible

UNITED FOR THE PRESERVATION
AND PERPETUATION OF RELIGIOUS ENTERTAINMENT, INC.
448 WEBB AVENUE
BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101
(502) 843-4863

GREETINGS:

I suppose that you are wondering just what is this organiza-
tion. What is UPPRE, Inc.? What is its purpose?

UPPRE, Inc. is organized for the purpose of creating a written
and recorded history of religious entertainment in the city
of Bowling Green, the state of Kentucky, and the entire
United States. To reach these ends, UPPRE, Inc. plans to
provide commissions, scholarships, and grants for studies
and research in the field of gospel music.

UPPRE, Inc. plans to promote and develop the artistic and
aesthetic aspects of gospel music through recordings, videos,
motion pictures, television, and stage productions.

UPPRE, Inc. will give aid, guidance, and assistance to artists
not otherwise priviledged to career direction provided by
professional, profit-making agencies.

UPPRE, Inc. will conduct seminars, workshops to create and
promote public awareness and knowledge of the impact and
importance of religious entertainment.

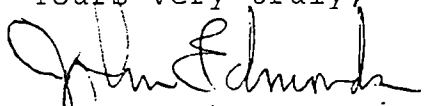
UPPRE, Inc. has already formed a Community Choir as one
of its first projects. Plans for the choir include concerts,
travel, radio and television appearances, and the release
of a record album in the spring of 1988.

Most importantly, UPPRE, Inc. is a nonstock, noprofit corporation!

If you have any questions about this organization or if
you feel that you can be of service to our programs or if
you feel that we can be of service to you, please contact
any of us at the address or phone number above.

We will look forward to hearing from you.

Yours very truly,



John Edmonds, President

Terry Bigbee
Marshall Edmonds

Mary Bigbee

Frederick Lowe
Beverly Brown

BOARD MEMBERS

INDEX

Name of Oral History Project Black Gospel Music

Tape 1 of 1. The number of the tape being indexed 1

Name of narrator: John Edmonds

Address: 448 Webb Avenue

Bowling Green, KY Tel. 843-4863

Name of principal interviewer: LuAnne Cervelli

Date of interview 09/18/88 Place of interview Bowling Green

Other persons present at interview: _____

Equipment used: Reel-to-reel ___; Cassette X; Model Panasonic RQ332S

Tape used: Brand Ampex; Amount (side 1) all; (side 2) all

Summary description of context and contents:

The interview took place at John Edmond's home at 448 Webb Avenue in Bowling Green. We talked about the narrator's experiences performing gospel music, his involvement in recording and promoting gospel groups, his work with the community choir, and his own views on gospel music.

Meter	Index of contents
	Tape 1, Side 1
000-003	Introduction
004-018	Early interest in gospel music
019-022	Early involvement in singing groups
023-024	Family's musical background
025-037	Beginning of group "Gospel Truth"
038-050	Gospel Truth USO overseas tour
051-056	Changes in group personnel
057-068	Group's style of music
069-074	Changes in group's style of music
075-081	Narrator's favourite songs to perform
082-095	Group's recording history
096-114	Narrator's involvement with recording now

Meter	Index of contents
115-201	Non-profit organization UPPRE, Inc.
202-218	Community choir of UPPRE
219-232	Types of people in community choir
233-256	Directing the community choir
257-281	Asher Records and gospel music in the recording industry
	End of Side 1.
000-007	Gospel music in the recording industry (continued)
008-016	Status of gospel music
017-021	Importance of recording gospel music
022-048	Development and history of gospel music
049-064	Future of gospel music
065-081	Crossover of gospel music to pop
082-095	Influence of pop music on gospel
096-107	Narrator's listening preferences
108-124	Influence of gospel music on narrator's life
125-136	Commercialism and gospel music
137-150	The songwriting process of the narrator
151-199	Promotion of gospel music artists
200-245	Gospel artists in Bowling Green
246-248	Closing remarks

SUMMARY

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Index	Meter	Summary of contents
Intro. comments	000-003	Introduction
Early interest in gospel music	004-018	Narrator first became interested in gospel acts on television. Began buying gospel albums. Had a large record collection of black gospel albums as a teenager. Took piano lessons since age seven, but learned to play gospel piano by copying records. Member of State Street Baptist Church youth choir as a child, at first unwillingly. Started playing for Sunday school at age twelve, for church at age fourteen. Was trainer and pianist for church choir at age fourteen. Organized first group out of this youth choir (Bethel Baptist).
Early involvement in singing groups	019-022	Joined first group at age fifteen, second at nineteen. Organized group from church choir and toured with them every summer.

<u>Index</u>	<u>Meter</u>	<u>Summary of Contents</u>
Family's Musical Background	023-024	Parents sang in choir, mother is a member of community choir. Brother plays saxophone and sings. Narrator is only family member with a career interest in music.
Beginning of group Gospel Truth	025-037	Group started in 1964. Began touring on a small basis by writing to churches in advance, asking to play there and for accomodations. The group toured in this manner each summer for several years.
USO Overseas Tour	038-050	Group auditioned for USO director in Hollywood. Went on overseas tour first to Greenland at Christmas. In later years, toured Viet Nam, and the Mediterranean. Group's name was changed from Angelic Specials to John Edmond's Gospel Truth by a USO director who felt that the name Angelic Specials would not appeal to soldiers.
Changes in group personnel	051-056	One original member, Frederick Lowe, is still with group. Lowe's cousin, William Cullen was with group at one time. Had at various times in group various female singers: Valerie McCullen, Marilyn Whitlock, Jenice Williams. Gospel Truth is an all male group now, and has members in Los Angeles for when the group travels and members in Bowling Green.
Style of Music	057-068	Narrator considers group's music traditional, but contemporary in the sense that many of the songs are new. The group tries to vary the style of songs in a performance to please different members of the audience. The group does not operate in the traditional quartet style of harmony.
Changes in style of music	069-074	The group's music has changed in that it has more instrumentation (drums, bass and rhythm guitar, synthesizer). The group originally played only piano and tambourine. Although new songs have been added, they play some of the same songs that they performed when first starting out.
Favourite Songs	075-081	Narrator finds difficulty in choosing a favourite song; likes "Lucky Old Sun" and "This Old Landmark".
Group's Recording History	082-095	Gospel Truth has recorded four albums, the first in 1972. Randy's Record Mart, a black music mail order house, was attempting to get into the recording business, and Gospel Truth was one of the first artists signed, and recorded their first album.

Index

Meter

Summary of Contents

The group later recorded two albums with Nashboro Records, after being discovered by talent scouts at Opryland. Gospel Truth was also included on a compilation album released by this company.

Involvement with recording now 096-114

The narrator is involved in a non-profit organization which is committed to recording four albums a year by local gospel artists. This recording company is called Asher Records, after the narrator's father. The narrator has recorded albums by Gospel Truth and the organization's community choir. Production of albums as complete works with continuity is described as challenging and interesting.

Non-Profit Organization 115-201

Narrator has started a non-profit organization called UPPRE, Inc.--United for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Religious Entertainment. UPPRE has organized an 104 voice community choir, is researching gospel music history in the area, and will produce four record albums a year of local artists. UPPRE is also planning to publish at least a pamphlet in the next year, and has started a gospel Hall of Fame which consists of honoured names of local singers and international stars who have played in Bowling Green. UPPRE put on a gala presentation for the Hall of Fame induction, which is to be a yearly event, with a play about the history of gospel music written by the narrator, Come On and Sing. UPPRE's ambitions lie in making videos, and films about the lives of important gospel artists. The narrator at this point makes an interesting commentary on the status of gospel music in the recording industry and promotion of gospel recordings, and states that UPPRE is interested in the promotion of the music it records. The narrator states that divisions of UPPRE, like the recording division, could become for profit.

Community Choir 202-218

UPPRE, Inc. started a community choir of 104 members. It is an inter-racial and interdenominational group of all ages. The narrator states that there is no prerequisite except that the member must belong to a church and believe in God. The choir has recorded an album and taped a television show.

Types of People in Choir 219-232

Narrator explains that members come from a variety of professions: teachers, ministers, musicians, nurses, librarians, accountants. Describes choir as a social outing for members and a spiritually uplifting experience for them.

Index

Meter

Summary of Contents

Directing
Community
Choir

233-256

Narrator describes how he prefers to direct and teach from the piano; he teaches the song to the director and the choir. Explains that there are not many qualified directors, and that it is important for the director to have a sensitivity to the audience. Would like to develop the choir and directors to the point where they can work completely on their own.

Asher
Records
and gospel
music in
the recor-
ding
industry

257-281

Narrator states that Asher wants to record local talent, and would like to "lure" in a well-known artist if it were possible. Feels that talent in the Bowling Green area would never have an opportunity to be known without this organization. States that this is because major labels will not consider unknowns or are overwhelmed by too much material to consider individuals.

End of Side 1

000-007

Narrator states that artists will have to record on a smaller basis and market their own materials if they are to be recorded at all, and that this is important because the group will be at least documented even if it does not become popular.

The
status of
gospel
music

008-016

Narrator feels that gospel music is taken for granted because it is easily accessible in churches. Also feels that gospel music is not easily accepted as entertainment by those who afraid that it will evangelize; the narrator describes encountering this attitude when the group played at clubs.

The
importance
of recording
gospel
music

017-021

Narrator explains that it is important that gospel music be documented because it may not always be accessible, it has value as an art form, and it is spiritually uplifting.

Develop-
ment of
gospel
music

022-048

Narrator explains that gospel music is descended from, but not related to, the spiritual. Describes how gospel music was snubbed as unsophisticated by members of some black churches; this may have been due to the fact that some gospel artists did not lead exemplary lives. States that this situation, while it has not disappeared, is changing. Narrator at this point responds to a question regarding different styles of gospel music and explains that there are quartets, female quintets, mixed male and female voices, and choirs in gospel music. Returns to discussion of division among black churches, how the same people would attend a "sophisticated" church Sunday

<u>Index</u>	<u>Meter</u>	<u>Summary of Contents</u>
		States that gospel music is becoming more respected, in the narrator's lifetime.
Future of gospel music	049-064	Narrator states that the future of gospel is difficult to state, and that the music has, in the past been relatively stable, selling steadily over time. Describes how, in the sixties, gospel was more popular than it is now, with gospel groups working every day instead of just weekends at theme parks.
Crossover of gospel to pop	065-081	Narrator describes "Oh, Happy Day" as the last big crossover hit in 1969. Explains that some gospel fans dislike artists like Aretha Franklin, Sam Cooke, and Della Reese, who started out as gospel singers and crossed over into the pop field. Narrator tells how he feels that crossing over is a positive aspect of gospel, making it more well-known.
Influence of pop music on gospel	082-095	Narrator describes how gospel songs can be made by changing the lyrics of popular songs. States that an artist is bound to be influenced by what he or she hears, including radio and videos, and that there is nothing wrong with this fact.
Narrator's listening preferences	096-107	Narrator listens to: Aretha Franklin, Elton John, Barbara Streisand, Shirley Cesar, Clara Ward, Mahalia Jackson, Dionne Warwick, Patti LaBelle, Gladys Knight.
Influence of gospel music on narrator	108-124	Narrator states that he "eats and sleeps" gospel music, that going to church and believing in God have always been a part of his life. Mentions at this point that parents were members of a choir. Feels that gospel music has made him a stronger person, but that an artist must be commercial to a degree, but not sacrifice their personal beliefs.
Commercialism and gospel music	125-136	Narrator feels that gospel music is left out of mainstream recording because companies are not interested in traditional music. Feels that overproduction makes music devoid of message, which is worthless. Describes at this point preference for music with lyrics.
Song Writing Process	137-150	Narrator states that inspiration for song writing comes at strange times and places, gives example of writing "I Am Concerned" on a light rail transit car.

Index

Meter

Summary of Contents

Promotion
of gospel
music
artists

151-199

Describes how tapes are sent to radio station deejays for airplay and the necessity of only sending a limited amount of material out for airplay at one time in order to maintain control (cites career of Whitney Houston). Other methods of promotion are appearances, ads in magazines and newspapers, and a mailing list which UPPRE is developing which is being made up by members of the community choir. Narrator hopes that this mailing list can be used as a way for people to mail order recordings produced by Asher Records. Describes Asher's interest in promoting local talents on a broader than local level through television appearances and tours.

Gospel
artists
in
Bowling
Green

200-245

Names local talents, Spiritual Echoes, James Cosby John Huffman, Mary Barton, Euretha Tisdale. Describes contributions of the late Patricia Hicks in booking national gospel stars to play locally, and her induction into the gospel Hall of Fame. States that many rural artists are of excellent quality, they just do not have the opportunity to be noticed. Mentions traditional gospel touring circuit of churches in Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. Concludes by remarking that gospel artists are simply ordinary people with flaws like any others.

Closing

246-248

Closing remarks

TRANSCRIPTION

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CERVELLI: My name is LuAnne Cervelli, it's September 18, 1988, and I'm interviewing John Edmonds at his home in Bowling Green on the subject of gospel music. The first thing I'll ask you to get started, is just if you could tell me about how you became involved in gospel music, from the beginning, I guess.

EDMONDS: That goes back a whole lot of years. When I was a teenager, I would say, I would see the gospel singers like Mahalia Jackson on Ed Sullivan and the Ward Singers on different television shows, and this was exciting to me, you know, to think that the music we were hearing in church was on national television. So it kind of struck my ear so I decided I wanted to get involved with it so I started buying gospel albums every week. All the rest of the kids in my class were buying rock 'n roll records, and I'd save up my money and get gospel records, which would usually be an album because it was less expensive to buy an album than to buy twelve singles. And I started an enormous record collection by the time I was grown I had just about every--a record on just about every major black gospel artist that was out. And I had taken piano lessons

EDMONDS: since I was seven, but I got a lot of training just by listening
(CONTINUED) to records, I put a record on, and sat down at the piano and
tried to follow and duplicate what I was hearing.

CERVELLI: Did you join a choir, or--

EDMONDS: Yeah, I was a member of State Street Baptist Church in Bowling
Green and I belonged to the youth choir. I didn't want to
join, my parents made me join, but after I joined I--actually
I joined the choir before I really got into gospel music, and
I must have been about, I guess, about nine or ten and then I
started getting interested in it. Then I started playing for
Sunday school, when I was about--yeah, when I was about twelve.
And then I was playing for church when I was fourteen--New
Bethel Baptist Church, I was the trainer and the pianist for
the youth choir there, and I was only fourteen myself, a lot
of them were older than I was. But I was able to teach them
the songs that I was hearing on all these records that I was
buying, and that's a lot of fun. And I organized my first
group out of the youth choir.

CERVELLI: How old were you then?

EDMONDS: I was a little older than--let's see--when I became part of it,
let me backtrack--I became part of a group when I was fifteen
and then when I was nineteen, then I organized a group at the
church where I was still playing there, so I pulled four kids
out of the choir and organized a group and every summer we'd
go on the road and sing at churches all over the country. We
had a lot of fun, we never made a whole lot of money [laughs]
at that period, at that point, but it was a lot of fun.

CERVELLI: Would you say you come from a singing family or--

EDMONDS: My dad and my mother both sang. In fact, the community choir
which we will talk about later, my mother is a member of.
And my brother used to play saxophone, and he sings. But I
was the only one who went at it career-wise.

CERVELLI: So tell me about the gospel group you started, the one you
have now.

EDMONDS: Okay, we--it was organized in sixty-four, and that's the exact
date, my age may be wrong that I gave you, but it was actually
organized Christmas in sixty-four. And I set up a strategy,
I would write to various chambers of commerces in whatever city
we wanted to travel to and ask them to send me a list of churches
there, and other information, radio stations--today I know how
to do it a little more technically than I did then, because I
was still young and it was all new to me. But, I would get
these lists and I would compile them, and then I'd make up a
form letter, and say, you know, 'our group is coming to your
area on the tour, we would like to sing at your church on
such-and-such a date' and we'd ask for a free will love offering,
and places to stay and food. And some--we wouldn't get responses

EDMONDS: from everybody, but we would get enough responses where we could
 (CONTINUED) book a little tour, say, for June and July when everybody was
 out of school, and we'd always make enough to go on to the next
 place, and we never had to worry about hotels, because the
 churches would put us up in their homes, and they would cook
 lavishly for us [laughs] and, as a result of that, we did that
 year after year. We sang at the USO club in Colorado Springs
 because someone had suggested to me that, while we were singing
 at the church, I contact this lady who was a friend of theirs,
 and see if we could sing for the USO club, so we did. She, in
 turn, suggested that we talk to the USO director in Hollywood
 when we were in Los Angeles and in turn we set out an audition
 and, in years later when we were old enough, we auditioned for
 USO and they accepted us and we went on tours overseas which
 paid money, and so forth and so on.

CERVELLI: Where did you travel overseas?

EDMONDS: Greenland was the first tour. And it was in Christmas, it was
 during the holidays, Christmas and New Year's. And this is the
 season when it's totally dark in Greenland, six, you know, they
 have six months of daylight and six months of darkness. And I
 didn't want to go, you know, we had actually volunteered for
 Viet Nam for various reasons. But they didn't send us to Viet
 Nam, on the first tour, they sent us to Greenland. And I said
 'what a drag', I mean, but we had a great time. It was really
 fantastic. Everybody was really receptive to our performances,
 and they were just as destitute as the guys in Viet Nam only
 it wasn't a war time situation. But they were completely
 isolated up there and no--any touch from home made them feel
 good, so they showed us a wonderful time and, like I said, it
 was during the holidays and it was a nice Christmas and New
 Year's. Then, in later years, we finally did go to Viet Nam.
 We went there three times during the war. And we toured Europe,
 we got to go to--we went on a Mediterranean area tour. We got
 to go to northern parts of Africa, Morocco, we also went to
 Greece, Italy, Turkey, Spain, the island of Crete, so it was a
 lot of fun, a lot of fun--

Simultaneously: CERVELLI: What was the--
 EDMONDS: A lot of hard work.

CERVELLI: Sorry, what was the group called then?

EDMONDS: John Edmond's Gospel Truth.

CERVELLI: Is it still called that?

EDMONDS: Uh-huh. In fact, there was a USO director that gave us that
 name.

CERVELLI: I see.

EDMONDS: He thought it would be a little more, as he said, commercial.
 And which I didn't like that at first. [laughs] We were the
 Angelic Specials to begin with, which I guess might not work

EDMONDS: in a--a bunch of soldiers might not want to come to hear a group (CONTINUED) called the Angelic Specials, whereas the Gospel Truth has a ring to it.

CERVELLI: Who was in the group then?

EDMONDS: Huh?

CERVELLI: Who was in the group then?

EDMONDS: Okay, we had various personnel. I have one member that's still that was there from the beginning, who's still in the group, his name is Frederick Lowe. And his cousin, William Cullen was with us at that time, and we had various females--at one time there was a girl named Valerie McCullen and Marilyn Whitlock, who was from here, she was--she worked with us from time to time at different stages in our career, and there was a girl from Los Angeles named Jenice Williams who toured with us also on trips we made.

CERVELLI: Is this--are these the same people who are in the group now?

EDMONDS: No, I have an all male group now. I have some guys on the west coast that I still use when we travel and I have some guys here in Bowling Green that we do when we're just working in this area. [Train whistle in background]

CERVELLI: So it changes, depending on where you're working?

EDMONDS: Right.

CERVELLI: I see.

EDMONDS: But the sound never changes, the style. We manage to maintain that.

CERVELLI: How would you classify the music that you're playing--

EDMONDS: Uh--that's--

CERVELLI: Or would you?

EDMONDS: [laughs] I hate to. People ask you all the time, 'do you consider yourself traditional or are you contemporary?' Well, that's a touchy question. I consider what we're doing contemporary, I mean, traditional music. Traditional gospel. But then, if you take under consideration that some of the things are new that I've written, then, in a sense they are contemporary. So, we try to mix, mix it up so we can reach all levels. Younger people really go for the contemporary and the rock gospel, and the older people tend to lean back towards the traditional. So we try to give them--we try to make everybody happy and ourselves too, you know. I like to put forth a show that when it's over, I'm satisfied you know, it's reached me. Then I know that

EDMONDS: if it reaches me, it should reach somebody else. It usually
 (CONTINUED) works that way, [laughs] sometimes it doesn't, but I still
 think--I-I would like to maintain that we are a traditional
 gospel group. We're not a trad--we're all guys but it's not
 the traditional quartet sound with--our harmonies are based a
 little differently. I really wouldn't know how to classify
 or name the harmonic style that we use, but you just have to
 hear it to understand it, I guess.

CERVELLI: Has--has the kind of music that you're playing-- has it changed
 since the start of the group?

EDMONDS: To a degree. We have more instrumentation. In the old days
 we used to go out--I played keyboards--well, not really
 keyboards, at that time it was just an acoustic piano, and we
 had a tambourine and that was it. And now today, you know,
 we use drums, we have guitar, excuse me, bass guitar, rhythm
 guitar, and then we use a synth--synthesizer. (I get hung up
 on that one) a lot. This is one of the only changes. We
 are even doing some of the same songs that we used to do when
 we first started. I mean, we're constantly adding new songs
 too, but we still--we're still basically--

Simultaneously: CERVELLI: What are some of the--
 EDMONDS: --the same.

CERVELLI: What are some of the--your favourite songs that you like to do
 over the years?

EDMONDS: That's a hard question, too! [laughs] What are some of my
 favourite songs that I like to do--I like--"This Old Landmark"
 that's a song that's older than I am that we do that's up tempo,
 a lot of animation. I like "Lucky Old Sun", we recorded that.
 We've got a new album that will be released actually, this
 coming week. I like all the songs on there, I wrote 'em all
 [laughs] We haven't actually started doing a lot of them in
 concert, but we do some of them, and we--by the time the album
 gets out--is being sold, we will be doing all of those songs
 in live performances. It's really hard to pinpoint the favourite
 song.

CERVELLI: So I take it you have--you've been recording?

EDMONDS: Yeah. We--we've got four albums out now. Over the past--
 seventy-two was when the first one was released, and it was
 --you're not familiar with this area--WLAC Radio? I'm sure
 you're familiar with WLAC out in Nashville--television, well,
 there's also a WLAC Radio, and in the, I guess, forties and
 fifties and sixties it was big on playing gospel. And they
 were sponsored a lot by a Randy's Record Mart, which is located
 in Gallatin, Tennessee which was a mail-order house for
 predominantly black music--rhythm 'n blues, gospel and--which
 is still in existence, and they, in 1970 they thought they
 were going to try out a new project, aside from selling records
 they were going to record, so we were one of their first artists.

1-11

EDMONDS: The label folded [laughs] it didn't last very long. But we got our first album out of the deal, so that was pleasing. (CONTINUED) And then in seventy-four, and seventy-five, we worked at Opryland U.S.A. and we had some scouts from ~~Nonesuch~~ records come out and hear us, and we had sent tapes to them years and years before, but it took the prestige of working at a theme park to get them really interested. So they signed us up, and we did two albums for them, and then we were a part of a collection album that they released. So this--this got us into the recording aspect of it, and presently--[At this point his mother interrupts from outside, and he has me shut the recorder off. The tape begins again mid-sentence due to a recorder problem.]

CERVELLI: --what you're recording now [laughs]

EDMONDS: Oh, yeah. I'm getting into--well, we've formed an organization since moving back here to Bowling Green called UPPRE Incorporated. And, a division of UPPRE, one of their projects is a record company. So our goal is to release four record albums a year minimum, on somebody in the area. And we've organized a community choir with 104 voices signed up and in March of this year we did a live recording at the State Street Baptist Church. We got enough material recorded that day to put together two and maybe a half albums, so their release is already--then, last month the first album of the choir was released. And the record company's named Asher Records, which is named after my father and who died a year and a half ago, which is the reason I moved back to Bowling Green. And next-this week that we're going into Gospel Truth has their release. I'm in the studio now working on a variety artist album, different people here in the Bowling Green area, because we are using a quartet from Glasgow also.

For one of the tours --this is new to me, because I've never really been in the production end of putting a record together, but it's so much fun, it really is. And, you know, you're in charge and the responsibility is yours to select the right tunes and make the album come together and not simply be just a collection of songs. You want the whole album to be an entity as well as individual songs, but you want it to be centrally, central, in theme. And that's a lot of fun, that's a lot of hard work, you spend a lot of time in the studio and a lot of time listening and redoing things that don't come out quite right. It's not just the simple fact of going in and sitting down and recording and you're through. There's a lot more to it than that. So, I'm getting into that aspect and I'm learning a lot, too. So that's favorable. I'm talking too much! [laughs]

CERVELLI: No, no problem. Tell me more about--about the--this non-profit organization.

EDMONDS: Okay, I said it--it's called UPPRE, that's U-P-P-R-E. And which is not the way most people would spell upper. But if the British can spell theatre with the r first, we can spell upper with the r first. And it stands for United for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Religious Entertainment. And, which to me says exactly what are about and what we

EDMONDS:
(CONTINUED)

want to do. As I said, we've already organized a community choir, we've got two board members who are researching gospel music in the area, we're going to compile a written history of gospel here in Bowling Green, Warren County and, eventually spread it out to include Kentucky and then the United States. We plan to have something published even if it's just as small as a pamphlet, by the Spring. And, as I said, we're planning to do four record albums a year. We've already set up a gospel music Hall of Fame for Bowling Green, and we had the festivities at the Capitol Arts Center in June. We inducted fifteen people into the Hall of Fame. In name only, we don't actually have a building housing the Hall of Fame, which is another of our long range goals, to actually have a Hall of Fame and a museum here in Bowling Green. Eight of the people that were inducted were local people, and then the others were international gospel stars who at one time in their career, had been to Bowling Green to perform. And the evening turned out fabulous, we used a play that I had written called Come On And Sing which is, was more of a documentary than a play. We had a narrator and he would give details and information about certain gospel stars, career, then we would have different people who portrayed these people, they'd come out and sing whatever their big hit song was that people would have remembered them by. And attendance was good, and everybody that attended said that they really [clock strikes] enjoyed it and that they were looking forward to a repeat of it next year. So this is what we plan to do, yearly, have a Hall of Fame induction. We want to do videos, we eventually want to get into even maybe movie making if, now, not if, when we can do so financially--

CERVELLI: What kind of films would you make?

EDMONDS: Well, all of this I want to revolve around gospel, say, for instance, maybe the life of Mahalia Jackson. The life of some other great gospel star, there are a lot of background people who, people never knew about, who people aren't aware of and you could call their name, they wouldn't even know. Lucy E. Campbell--if you go through some of the old, the new modern hymn books you'll see her name in there where she wrote a lot of the hymns in there like "Touch me Lord Jesus", "Footprints of Jesus". These people need to be brought to public attention. You know, maybe we could do a movie of her life. She was a schoolteacher, she spent the last years of her life teaching Sunday school after she retired, and this is the period when she did most of her writing. She'd come home from Sunday school, and whatever was on her mind, she'd sit down and write a song about it. And people are still singing her songs. Another songwriter, Thomas Dorsey, I don't know if you're familiar with him or not, he wrote "Precious Lord" and, what's the big Red Foley hit--"Peace in the Valley". And he--he's still alive, he's in his ninties. I saw him about three years ago and he's still getting around. He was attending a gospel singer's funeral in Los Angeles, and he said--it's kind of comical, especially at a funeral, he had written a new song, a

EDMONDS:
(CONTINUED)

new verse to "Precious Lord". I can't remember the exact lines, but the last part of it said, you know, about the friends and loved ones that he held so dear, most of them were gone but he was still here. [laughs] It was funny but it's kind of touching, too. These things need to be made--made public knowledge. Gospel has always been overlooked. They never use it as a theme for a movie, very seldom for television. Broadway has explored it. They've done a lot of gospel plays that were big hits on Broadway. Going back to Green Pastures, which I think was in the-- maybe forties or fifties, and then, in the sixties, Black Nativity, which Langston Hughes wrote. Incidentally, we did a production of that in Long Beach about three Christmases ago. It turned out very nice. You're Arm's Too Short To Box With God, Don't Bother Me I Can't Cope, and the--the biggie now is Mama I Want To Sing. I think it was--it played in Nashville, about--one of the touring companies came through. But Broadway is--has always used gospel in them. And even a lot of the productions that weren't gospel, they did gospel numbers in them. But the other forms of the media haven't really gone way out--even the recording industry doesn't. It falls short, I feel. When we were signed with Nashboro--Nashboro at that point was the biggest gospel, black gospel, distributor in the world. And they had a lot of good artists, well-known artists, in their catalog. But they never spent a dime on promotion or set up any kind of tours for the artists to promote record sales, which I never--I heard a lot of rumors as to what all they did, but I never understood that. It wasn't fair to the artists at all, they--most of the gospel singers would buy their product at a cheap price, you know, a cut rate price, maybe two or three bucks for an album, and they'd take them and sell them on the road. You buy them, you know, in boxes in quantities for the wholesale price. And this is how they expected their sales to be done. At that point in our career we were working in places like Opryland and Magic Mountain where you couldn't take records in and sell, you know, so this didn't help us at all. And they didn't buy ads in the Billboard or Variety. They didn't even buy ads on T.V., you know, where you can order . They spent, the first album that we recorded from them, they spent close to ten thousand dollars in the studio. They hired musicians from the Nashville Symphony to come in with the strings and the horns. And after, I said if they spent this much money on it, then surely they'll promote it, but they never did. So this is what we hope to change if we can, when we get financially able, we can spend a lot of money on promotion and publicity, because that's what will sell your product, I don't care how good it is, if you, if people aren't aware that it's available, then you'll just be sitting on it.

CERVELLI: So what do you think UPPRE INC. will become, say, years from now?

EDMUNDS: A dynasty--a magnate! [laughs] Legally, we can remain non-profit and our subdivisions, like a record company or a video

EDMONDS: company, can be profit making, according to the law. The
 (CONTINUED) only thing that we couldn't do is funnel money from the record
 company back into UPPRE. So it would be a tax shelter, you
 know, then you would get into legal hassles. As long as we
 kept everything above board and kept our books correct, then
 we could operate all these other things as profit-making.
 Or we may choose to keep it as a non-profit corporation as,
 as you know, the main thing I want to see, I want to see
 gospel get its proper dues as an art form, as an entertainment
 form, not to--don't get me wrong, I believe in what I'm
 singing about very deeply--but we don't sing, it's not my
 personal belief to sing to try to persuade you to a way of
 thinking. We're singing to entertain you, to make you feel
 better. In the--it may happen that you are persuaded, but
 this isn't the intent. We're not--we don't evangelize. There
 are groups that do, but this just isn't, this isn't my thing.

CERVELLI: So tell me more about the--the choir thats a part of UPPRE.

EDMONDS: As I say, we've got 104 members, we've got all ages, we have--
 it's integrated, we have blacks and whites, and it's all
 denominations, we have Holiness, we have Baptist, Methodist,
 and it's open to anybody who wants to join. There are no
 restrictions. When we first organized, we did say that there
 was an age restriction, but if we had received enough interest
 in, say, children under twelve, then we would have formed a
 separate section for them. It's hard to blend children's
 voices with adult voices, unless it's a child like Branda Lee,
 you know, who's born with [laughs] an adult voice from the
 time she's two. It doesn't always work. That's about the
 only restriction we have, and that they belong to some church
 and that they do believe. That's the only prerequisite. And
 as I said, we've cut an album, we've--we've taped a television
 show last Tuesday night in Nashville on the Nashville Gospel
 Show, and we taped three songs and they will be aired at
 different times between now and Christmas, they'll give us the
 exact dates when we are going to be on.

CERVELLI: What kind of people are joining the choir?

EDMONDS: What do you mean by what kind?

CERVELLI: From what walks of life?

EDMONDS: Good people or bad people? [laughs] All/kinds. We have profes-
 sional people, we have hairstylists, we have librarians, we
 have schoolteachers, we have retired schoolteachers. We have
 cooks, we have musicians, we have ministers, in fact, I think
 we have three ministersthat have joined from the area. No
 doctors, no lawyers, we need one. [laughs] Nurses, we have a
 nurse, we have several nurses there, and accountants, which are
 good to have around. Just about every--just about anybody that
 you can think of. And it's a lot of fun. It's--it's a social
 outing for them as well as spiritually uplifting to them. In
 fact, we're planning a picnic this Saturday out to Three Springs

EDMONDS: Park.
(CONTINUED)

CERVELLI: Do you--do you yourself teach in the choir or direct it?

EDMONDS: Yeah, well, I teach--I stay mostly at the piano. But I teach them the songs then I train the directors how to direct them on the particular song. It's kind of a weird way to work, usually you'll have a--you'll teach a song to your director and you have your director to teach it to the choir. But we've had to move so fast in order to make preparations, I've had to take a lot of shortcuts. It's much easier for me to direct and teach from the piano and then have the director there and then--then they learn. Because there aren't that many people in the area who have had a lot of experience in directing. I mean, a lot of people can stand up and wave, but, you know, there are certain cues you have to give to the choir so they'll know what section of the song to move to, and--A director has to pick up the pulse of an audience, too, because, especially in gospel music, you may want to change your format or, say, for instance, if you're doing a song, and you're into the chorus and your audience is really getting moved, and ordinarily it's time to go back and do say, verse two or verse three, but you want to repeat the chorus, the director has to be able to key into this and instead of taking them back, you know, give them the cue to go on and do the chorus again, whatever's working. And this is what I'm trying to instill in the directors. And I want to train and develop the choir where I can sort of wean them and I won't even have to be there to work with them, you know, have musicians and directors where they can work on their own. So we can send them out in one direction and Gospel Truth can go in another direction and maybe I'll even be in another. You can reach more people that way.

CERVELLI: Tell me more about--it is UPPRE INC. that's recording groups?

EDMONDS: Yeah, it's name is Asher Records. [Cervelli says something here, but it is unintelligible.] Asher Records is a division of UPPRE INC.

CERVELLI: Oh, I see.

EDMONDS: We want to record people in the area. Eventually, once we get established, we may be able to go out and lure in say, a big name artist, if not to do a whole album, just to make a guest appearance on an album. This always boosts your--your label if you can pull in somebody who has already got an established name. And we want to--there are a lot, there's a whole lot of talent here in the Bowling Green area that, in the gospel field. And this is where we want to stay, in the gospel field. That would never, will never, you know, unless something comes here like this organization. They would never get a chance to get on a major label. Most labels will not hear unknowns. If you find a company that is soliciting or

EDMONDS: listening to new artists and new material, they've got it stacked up so high in their offices that it's impossible to go through and listen to everybody individually and give them adequate consideration. So this is the only way and I see this going on more across, I mean, this is going to have to happen across the whole country in order to give everybody an equal chance to exploit their talents. Music is going to have to go back to [At this point the tape cuts off as it is the end of side 1.]

[The statement which was cut off stated: "Music is going to have to go back to the hands of the musicians".]

CERVELLI: I'm sorry you got cut off by the tape.

EDMONDS: But I said the larger companies are only recording who they want to and who they feel will sell for them and they don't want to spend any money in developing a new artist and doing a lot of publicity to get them in front of the public's eye. So, people are going to have to start doing things on a smaller basis. Like people in, say, Elizabethtown, and there's some talented people there, they ought to say 'well let's pool our monies together, let's get some resources or get some backers' and go in to the studio and record something. If it doesn't sell any further than Elizabethtown, at least they've done it and they've left a record that will be there. And by a record I don't just mean a spinning record, I mean an intangible record, you know, when they're dead and gone there'll be something that people can always remember them by. I think that's important.

CERVELLI: Why do you think--why--you were stating earlier how gospel music has not really been given much attention by the majority of people. Why do think that is?

EDMONDS: I think they take it for granted. It's something that you can, well, not in all churches, but if you wanted to hear gospel, you could go to any--you could find a church here in Bowling Green, or just about wherever you are, whether it was white gospel or black gospel, that you could go to and you could hear it for free. You could put a nickel in the offering or you could put in nothing, and it's something that's 'oh, yeah, I can hear it whenever I want to'. You--the other forms aren't this accessible, and you, people just--I think this may be one of the reasons that people just tend to take it for granted and, when people want to be entertained, they are afraid of hearing gospel music because they think they're going to be preached to, I think, a lot of times. We got this response a lot of--lot of--we've worked in a lot of clubs, especially on the west coast, and you could always hear somebody say 'gospel in a club, man, I don't want to hear no gospel'. I mean, the reaction would be totally opposite once we had finished. But it's--there's a stigma against it, I don't know why, I can't really pinpoint it.

CERVELLI: Why do you think it's important to record gospel music, if it's so accessible?

EDMONDS: Because it may not always be. And it is an art form, you know, regardless of how accessible it is. It's a definite art form. And it's spiritually uplifting, too.

CERVELLI: It's worthy of being--preserved?

EDMONDS: Definitely. It's my favourite form of music. [laughs] I mean, always has been.

CERVELLI: So how does that--does that fit in with--is gospel music related to the past?

EDMONDS: Gospel music is relatively new. You trace its roots--some people may trace it back to the slavery period, but this is totally different from spirituals. Spiritual music is--it's part of the family tree, but gospel is a new child, maybe even a step child. When it was really hot, a lot of blacks even snubbed their nose at gospel music, and a lot of the--what's the word I want to use--the more sophisticated churches, black churches, wouldn't allow gospel music in their worship service. They wanted something more serene, more somber, more sedate, whatever. And there are some churches even now that frown upon gospel, they won't let gospel groups come in for concerts, and I don't know why that is either. A lot of people--I--I've read a lot of books on gospel, not a lot, because there aren't that many. People were trying to analyze and see why they said what some of the gospel singers lived such treacherous, scandalous lives, you know, with the drinking and the boozing that they felt that they really weren't sincere in what they were singing about. This was a part--this was part of it and it was this--it was a class thing, too. And gospel music was always low on the totem pole, even among blacks at one point. It's not so now. Not so as much as it has been, according to what I've read. But--that's interesting, you should do a report on that in itself one day, why is gospel music the music industry's stepchild.

CERVELLI: It seems--I--I'm--from what little I've learned, that there are different factions within--within churches.

EDMONDS: Oh, yeah.

CERVELLI: Regarding, like you said, regarding the different attitudes toward gospel music, and their different--I've heard there are different kinds of--different churches have different kinds of gospel music.

EDMONDS: Yeah. There's well, there are different styles, whereas we said earlier there's the contemporary and the traditional, even with the traditional there are different breakdowns. You have the quartet style, then you have the female quintet sound, you have the mixed male and female voice sound, and you have the choir sound. You have that same breakdown in your

EDMONDS: contemporary, too. It's a really interesting thing. What point I was going to make a while ago, the higher class churches in the--we're still talking about black churches, specifically--in the city would not allow gospel in their churches. But on Sunday night around the corner where the Sanctified churches, whatever they call, as they call them, Holy Rollers, they would have singing there every Sunday night. You would see these same people who were sitting very pompous and pious at their church on Sunday morning, you would see them there, you know, patting their feet and getting down[laughs] with the beat, as the saying goes, listening to the gospel music. What's the difference? I mean, how could--yet they wouldn't allow it in their church, but they would go to this church and they would sit there and enjoy it. It's kind of--it's kind of contradictory, isn't it?

CERVELLI: Is that the case now? Or, as you say, it's changing.

EDMONDS: It's changing. It's not as bad as it has been. And like I said, I belonged to State Street and I can remember there when gospel music wasn't the in thing at all. And now it is, you know, they expect to have at least two or three gospel numbers and sometimes even more during their worship services. But it wasn't so when I was a kid coming up. [laughs]

CERVELLI: Where do you think gospel music is going? Is it still changing or--?

EDMONDS: It's hard to say. I can remember oh, every two or three years you would pick up a magazine, Billboard or Variety, 'Gospel Music Is Booming' you know, this and that. And I really don't think it--I think it just maintains an even keel. I remember reading an article on Mahalia Jackson and they were interviewing the writer of the article was interviewing a record producer, I can't even think of his name--Mitch Miller. He was working for her at the time. And he said, unlike other things that they did at Columbia Recording Company, Mahalia's albums didn't have a big spurt, you know, like when they're first released--when they were first released, you have the first two weeks of sales, and a popular song, a rock 'n roll song gets sky high then it drops. He said she didn't have this big shoot up, he said but if you checked the records at the end of the year, sales, she had sold as many or sometimes more than some of the biggies that had the two and three week, well you know what I'm trying to say--I can't think of the appropriate word--but it was the longevity, you know, it--it works out on an even keel. So I--I think it--it's popular now, it's in places where you wouldn't expect it, I mean, they have gospel night, I mean, gospel weekend at Opryland, they have gospel week at Disneyland, they have an Easter gospel special at Magic Mountain,--all the theme parks use gospel. ^{But} if you look back, in--in the sixties, the Ward singers worked at Disneyland five days a week. It was--it was just a, you know, in thing, it wasn't just a weekend event and they were big headliners there. So

EDMONDS: this was back in the sixties. The only thing--I'm trying to
(CONTINUED) think, I don't want to say something that's incorrect--there
hasn't been a big gospel record hit to cross over since "Oh,
Happy Day". That was in--I would say seventy--1970, sixty nine.
You're probably not even familiar with the song.

CERVELLI: I remember it. [laughs]

Simultaneously: CERVELLI: --sort of
EDMONDS: [laughs] You look so young.

EDMONDS: But that was the big hit for him, he'd never had another hit
like that, I mean he's had hits in the gospel field, but he's
never had a crossover like that. But they were--they were
playing that everywhere. People were dancing to it, you know,
they didn't realize it was a gospel song. But maybe that's
what we need now, you know, somebody to come along with a big
gospel hit that will cross over, it might bring some more
attention to gospel.

CERVELLI: So you--what do you think about crossing over? Is that--

EDMONDS: I think it's fine. I think it's excellent. I don't--I don't
knock anything that anybody does if their intentions are good.
A lot of diehard gospel people knock even the gospel artists
who change over, like in the past, Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin,
she started out a a gospel singer, Della Reese, and then they
all crossed over to their respective fields now. This is fine,
you know, this--this is their occupation, this is their
living. Aretha just released a new gospel album, in fact,
anyway, so. There's a magazine out called Totally Gospel
and I was reading through it, oh, the past issue, and someone
had written in complaining because they had featured Aretha
Franklin on the cover, as if she wasn't a true gospel singer,
you know, she was just out there trying to make money. Which
we all are doing, everybody's trying to make a living, you
know, when you're trying to make a living you have to make
money to eat. But I don't knock her for that and I don't
knock--back to what we were really originally talking about
I don't knock the Hawkins for having a crossover hit. When
it's good for them, you know, they made a killing off of that
one song and it made them a household name in the gospel field
and even in other fields. I'm sure people still remember the
song.

CERVELLI: Does crossover have the--the reverse effect? Does it influence--
do other forms of music influence gospel music?

EDMONDS: Oh yeah. The what--what's it called now--contemporary Christian
music which is not really gospel. If you don't listen closely
to the words you think it's--it's metal, you know, or acid
rock, anyway. There have--a lot of gospel singers have even
taken tunes and changed the words around and made church songs
out of them. Gladys Knight's "You're the Best Thing That Ever
Happened To Me"--James Cleveland did a song called "Jesus Is

EDMONDS: the Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me". Same tune, basically (CONTINUED) the same style, he changed some of the words. And he had a separate hit in the gospel world. And he--he even refers to Gladys Knight in the song in some kind of way. He said Gladys says, you know, that you're the best thing but he says Jesus is. So it--it goes back and forth. Everything, you know, there are tradeoffs in everything. And you can't help but be influenced by something if you listen to it. I don't listen to gospel music all the time. I listen to all kinds when I keep my radio on in the car. And I even watch the videos [laughs] on the--what is it--channel 22? And MTV and, I'm sure I'm influenced by some of that. And like, like I'm sure other gospel singers and gospel musicians are influenced by what they hear. There's nothing wrong with that, either. It's all music, you know, God made it all.

CERVELLI: So who are other artists that you like to listen to? Gospel or otherwise?

EDMONDS: Aretha Franklin. And whatever she sings, I like to listen to. Gladys Knight, I like Elton John, Barbara Streisand. In the gospel field Shirley Cesar--in fact, I went to the concert in Nashville on this past Monday night. It was fantastic. I like to listen to some of the older music, even in gospel, like Roberta Martin Singers, she's been dead fifteen years. I like to listen to Clara Ward and Mahalia Jackson are my big inspirations. I still like to listen to them. I'm--I don't have a favourite, you know, that I could think of. I love Patti LaBelle, Dionne Warwick. Dionne Warwick and Patti LaBelle and Gladys Knight did a special for HBO called "Sisters in the Name of Love" and I taped it and I've watched it over and over again, it was fantastic, really good, and they did a couple of gospel numbers in the show--they were really good. I can't think of anybody else.

CERVELLI: This may seem like a--like a stock question or a cliché, but how has gospel music influenced your life?

EDMONDS: [laughs] I eat and sleep it, you know. I'm constantly thinking about a new arrangement, a new song, or a new idea. And I grew up in the church, in the time I can never remember not-- I can never remember not going to church, I can never remember not believing in God. I just soaked it all up. When I was a young kid, too, my parents sang in a church choir called Frye's Memorial Choir which was named for my maternal grandfather. And they would go out on Sunday afternoons and I would go with them and that--I didn't mention that earlier, but that was a big inspiration to me, too. Because at that time I couldn't, I didn't know how to play piano and I always thought it would be fantastic to sit there and play. But, I think it's made me stronger being in the gospel field because it's not as lucrative as other forms are, but every [clock strikes] it can be--it can be gainful if it's if you find the right avenue is to make yourself commercial, and I hate to say that, but you do. In a sense you have to become commercial, but it's like, you

EDMONDS: know, you have to lean this way a little bit and this way a little bit, but if you stay right and you're true to yourself in what you actually believe, if you lean a little bit each way--as long as you can keep your balance and you're safe and you don't fall. But I hate to think of people who have to change their style or their way, even their personal beliefs just to--just to make it.

CERVELLI: How--how is commercialism affecting gospel music?

EDMONDS: The contemporary, I think, and back to the record companies, they won't--contemporary's the big thing now--they don't want any traditional music because they, according to their figures and their charts, contemporary's what's selling best. And they want something that's slick, they like a lot of instrumentation and, sometimes it's so overdone that the message in the song is lost. And to me this is still the most important thing in the gospel song, in any song. If I can't get any kind of feeling or theme or message from a song, even a love song or a blues song, whatever then, you know, it's--it's worthless. Music is pretty. I have never been one, though, to just like instrumental music. Some people can, some people can sit down and--if I'm doing something else, if I'm writing or if I'm drawing or typing or working, instrumental music is fine. But I like--I like to hear words. I like stories to be told, I like to--for pictures to be painted when I hear a song. And I think when you don't you lose something.

CERVELLI: What do you think of when you're writing songs yourself?

EDMONDS: What do I think of? That's another hard question. laughs Well, songs come to me in strange places, at strange times. I was--one of the songs that's on the album that's coming out next week is called "I Am Concerned". That is one of my favourites, too that I have written. And I--I wasn't motivated in any kind of way, I mean I didn't that day particularly--particularly concerned, about anyone's welfare any more than usual, I mean I--it wasn't like I had gone out and seen thousands and thousands of hungry children and so forth. But all of a sudden I was writing the RDT, which is the rapid transit system in Los Angeles, and these words just started coming to me and they started coming real fast. So I couldn't find any--I didn't have--I had a--a briefcase with me, I didn't have a notepad, I had a pencil, so I found the back of a church program, and I just wrote the words to the song down on that, because I knew if I didn't I'd forget them. And I still didn't have a complete tune to it, but it turned out really pretty, I thought after I got it worked up and taught it to the guys. And when we recorded it it came out really good. And this is the one that we are pushing first and we're sending out to the deejays for them to play. See how they like it, see how the public likes it. It was one of the tunes we did on the T.V. last week too . Because my group taped as well as the choir.

CERVELLI: You said you're sending it out to deejays to play--who's playing--who would play it? Who do you hope will play it?

EDMONDS: Each--I've got a big, thick book that lists of various radio stations across the country, and the hours that they play religious music, if they do, and the name of the deejay to send it to back there. We have two gospel deejays here in Bowling Green. Reverend Rainey is on WKCT. On Sunday mornings 9:30 to 10:30 he's been playing it, and then the Reverend Ron Whitlock has a black gospel show on WCVK, which is totally a religious station, and he's on on Saturday nights from 7:30 to 9:00. He's been playing it too. So we're--we're making little bitty ten minute tapes, one song each, one song on each side that we're sending out to the deejays. This way we can control what they're playing. If you send them in--the whole tape, then they can play whatever they like. We--we're trying to maintain control which is something that most gospel record companies don't do either. They just send out an album, or send out two or three songs and let the deejay decide. But if you notice in the career of Whitney Houston, incidentally, that's another artist I really like, she--they closely monitored everything that was sent out to the deejays, and if you'll follow down the album, each song became a hit on its own from the entire album. They would send out one, and they got all the airplay. About three or four months later they would release another from the same album, that got all the airplay. They drained every song [laughs] they drained it, you know, for everything they could get out of it. Which is smart, I thought.

CERVELLI: What else do you for promotion?

EDMONDS: We're going to do some appearances, probably before Christmas. And--to promote the record. We're going to take out some ads in the various gospel-related magazines and newspapers. And one thing we're going to do, we're going to use a mailing list, which we're going to--we are keenly in the process of putting it together now. Each choir member, as I said, we have 104, is going to bring a list of various people that they know personally in cities all over the country. And so we hope to put together a mailing list of maybe 500 to 1000 people, and we're going to send out flyers and set up a mail order system where they can fill out the order form and send it in with \$6.95 and we'll mail a tape back to them. This was done--I can't remember the group, I was trying to think of the name of the group last week, it's a rock group. They spent their money and did their own recording project and sold it mail order, and almost door-to-door. And they sold three million copies. And they--this, naturally was going to cause some attention--and they were beseiged by record companies who wanted to set a deal to buy the entire project. Well, they were in a position at that point where they could write up their own contract, and they worked up a deal with A&M Records where they would distribute their records, but not have total control. They kept that for themselves. So it can be done,

EDMONDS: it can work that way. There's a way to do anything. Within
(CONTINUED) the realms of the law [laughs] and God's will. Anything you
put your heart and mind to do I believe that you can--you can
accomplish it. It takes some work, though. You just can't
say 'Oh, I got faith in it, this will happen'. But the Bible
says faith without works is dead. You've got to--you've got
to put forth some effort, too.

CERVELLI: Is your goal to promote local talent in Bowling Green?

EDMONDS: To promote them, and not just promote them locally. Send them
out on road tours, get television appearances from them, for
them. The television thing that we did, we taped Tuesday night,
they are shown in eleven states in the southeast, they just
signed a deal with New Mexico to be shown there, they're
negotiating with one of the religious networks, not PTL, one
similar to it I can't even think what it is--think of the
name, what the name of it is. And they are already showing to
all of the Armed Forces networks overseas, which means every-
where that we have servicemen stationed, it will be shown there
too. So that will be a whole lot of exposure for us.

CERVELLI: I think I had you name a few people locally here, who are
some main talents in Bowling Green?

EDMONDS: There are a lot of groups here, there's a group called the
Spiritual Echoes, they've been singing 27 years--I think I'm
correct on that, yeah, 25 or 27. James Cosby is an excellent
singer. John Huffman, Mary Barton, these are all members of
the choir, too, incidentally. Euretha Tisdale is an excellent
singer, she's originally from Franklin but she's [accidentally
bumps table] she's been living here in Bowling Green about
ten or fifteen years now. I can't think of any other groups.
There was a lady here and she was one of the people that we
inducted into the Hall of Fame. Her name was Patricia Hicks,
and she was what you would call a little bit of everything.
She promoted, she brought gospel groups here, she wasn't a
preacher but she opened a little storefront church here where
the singers could go and have concerts or you could invite
singers in. In fact, she was one of the people that first
brought the Ward singers here back in the forties. She was--
she brought all kinds of famous groups here, booked them here.
And she died about a year and a half ago, about two years ago,
and we contacted her daughter who lives in Nashville and her
granddaughter who lives here, and they were both present at the
awards show, and they accepted the award for her. It was
real touching. But--ther're countless of artists here, and
comparable to any of the--the ones who are--who have the recording
contracts, who are making public appearances. In fact, some
of them are a lot better. It's just a matter of not having
the opportunity to present your talent. I remember I had the
opportunity to work with Clara Ward before she died, and she--
she would say in talking, you know, it's not--your name carries
you. She said that you can go, like some of these little
country churches that we've gone to do concerts, and said some
little gray-haired woman will come up out of the audience and
sing you out of the church. She said she just never had the

EDMONDS: opportunity to get anywhere, you know.
(CONTINUED)

CERVELLI: Where are the groups--locally right now, where do they play?

EDMONDS: Various churches here in town and there's a circuit that they follow, Tennessee, Kentucky, naturally, Indiana and Ohio. And they usually stay in that realm. Sometimes they venture out and go down to Georgia, Mississippi, the Carolinas or Florida.

CERVELLI: There's an established sort of circuit?

EDMONDS: A little circuit, yeah. There are certain churches where you know, you know, every Sunday night they're going to have somebody singing there. It's--it's a world all of its own. It's just interesting. [laughs] Gospel--gospel people are interesting people. But people have a tendency to think, well, because they sing gospel, that, you know, they are a superhero or they are holier-than-thou. But most of them are just like the people that are sitting out there. They curse, they smoke, they drink, they--they're just plain people. They have faults, and they have their good qualities, too. But, I don't know, everybody wants a hero, you know, they--they expect, you expect your minister, your school teacher, everybody that you look up to, you expect them to live lives without any blemishes at all. It can't be done--I haven't--I haven't found out how to do it. [laughs] I haven't found out--I haven't found that out.

CERVELLI: I think I've--I think you've answered all my questions. I want to thank you for--

EDMONDS: I enjoyed it. I've talked till my throat's sore!