Earl Myles, (hereafter “EM”) was born on December, 29 1960 in Coahoma County, Mississippi. EM’s mother who is no longer alive was Florida B. Myles Gibson. EM’s father who didn’t live with them is Rochester Polk and he left for Chicago shortly after EM’s birth. EM’s mom moved to Memphis and married Louis Gibson. EM’s mother came from a very musical family. Her brothers formed the gospel group The Sons of Wonder. The current lineup of the group consists of EM and his cousins Raymond, Lester and Lee Myles. EM played drums for the original group as a child. Lester played
guitar and Lee played bass for the original group. Raymond sang and played occasional drums with the original group. EM stayed in Memphis until he graduated from high school and then he returned to Clarksdale.

[ELAPSED TIME: 5 MIN.]

EM discusses venues where The Sons of Wonder has played, including Elvis Presley’s on Beale for the Sunday morning brunch. He recalls growing up listening to The Soul Stirrers, The Five Blind Boys of Mississippi, and The Five Blind Boys of Alabama. He also enjoyed r&b and jazz and has performed in those styles. After college he dedicated his life to gospel music and hasn’t performed in those other styles since then. EM grew up attending Silver Cloud Missionary Baptist Church in Friar’s Point. MS. It is a small country church and is where all The Sons of Wonder grew up in and were baptized in.

[ELAPSED TIME: 10 MIN.]

The church choir was influenced by Andrea Crouch and The Hawkins Singers and the only instrumentation in the church was piano. In response to my asking for a definition of gospel music, EM replied,

“Gospel music in my mind is the music that expresses life in its truest aspect and why we are here, how we got here. Gospel music talks about God, the father and his son Jesus and if you listen at the words of most gospel songs they all tell stories that concern God in the past, present and future.”
EM feels that gospel music is very similar musically to r&b and jazz, and it has always been that way. EM discusses the generation of gospel musicians who followed The Soul Stirrers such as The Jackson Southernaires. The Myles family started Voyage Records in the ‘80’s.

[ELAPSED TIME: 15 MIN.]

Voyage Records was created to record The Sons of Wonder. Voyage Records was located in Memphis until 2006 and then they moved to their current location. In Memphis they shared a building with E&J Records on Elvis Presley Boulevard. The two companies were known collectively as Twin Towers Entertainment. EM discusses that they all learn the music business by just doing it. They also are self-taught as musicians. EM discusses going to Rust College in Holly Springs, MS. on a full music scholarship.

[ELAPSED TIME: 20 MIN.]

EM discusses learning recording engineering. He talks about their transition from analog to digital recording. EM discusses the production history of Voyage Records. The first group they recorded other than themselves was The Mighty Gospel Warriors. They have also recorded Lee Williams, The Brown Singers, The Memphis Four, any more gospel artists. They have recently begun producing music videos.

[ELAPSED TIME: 25 MIN.]
EM discusses their business arrangement with gospel music video director Larry Clark who has a TV show out of Memphis called Gospel on Wheels. Voyage Records also has an arrangement with Youtube. EM discusses the collaborative process of creating a music video. EM talks about the distribution process of gospel music. They are affiliated with a company out of Nashville, Central South Gospel, a major distribution company.

[ELAPSED TIME: 30 MIN.]

EM discusses where Voyage Records CDs sell best, which is mostly in the mom and pop record stores and at their performances. EM talks about how technology is affecting Voyage Records and their ability to stay profitable.

[ELAPSED TIME: 35 MIN.]

EM discusses the financial hardships of a gospel group and how very few reach the level of fame where they can give up their day job. He talks about their new CD entitled Train Ride, which is being readied for release and how they are beginning the arrangements for some concert appearances to coincide with its release. EM talks about their audience.

“It’s always a praise party when we play somewhere. We just get together and enjoy what God has for us at that point in time, and we just like to bring the word to the people through our song.”

EM discusses the gospel package shows. He talks about playing with family and the level of trust and enjoyment that only exists in a family situation.
EM discusses the differences between blues and gospel, which in his opinion is only the lyrics. EM says the blues followers and gospel followers are exclusive to each other. EM talks about the future of gospel music and the challenge of making it entertaining for the young people.

[THE INTERVIEW ENDS AT 44 MIN.]