

Business Briefs

BUSINESS PROFILE

Reliability, quality of service helps Timmons clean up

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After 28 years in the business of cleaning up other businesses, James D. Timmons is at a point where he literally and figuratively be said to be cleaning up. The 55-year old owner of Timmons Janitorial Service, when asked if he would consider himself successful, "I am, I sure am."

And Timmons is indeed successful because of a philosophy that he employs in doing business. He said, "The first thing is to do a good job. In business a person has got to do twice as much as the white people do to be successful," and he stressed his belief that with an emphatic, "Not maybe."

One of the other qualities that is important to him is punctuality. "If I'm supposed to be here at 1 o'clock, don't want to see me here at 1:15, do you?...And it's the way I want it, and I want my people to be on time all the time," he said. "You've got to be better than the white man," he said, adding somewhat apologetically, "I'm sorry, but that's the way it is."

Timmons learned his business and developed his techniques when he was 18 and just out of high school. He is a native of Wadesboro in Alamance County went to work for S. C. Johnson and Sons in High Point. "They taught me how to strip floors and other things," he said. "Because the companies that were buying the Johnson products did not have their own janitors or janitorial firms, Timmons was frequently called upon for his expertise. "I had to show people how to put the wax on the floor and other things," he said.

What happened as a result was a surprise to Timmons. "I was in business, but I didn't know it," he said. "I think what must have been the same look of revelation

that came to him at the time. Each time that a company needed his help, he would go after hours at his job at Johnson's and provide the needed assistance. It earned him time off during the day from his regular job and paid off 2-1/2 years later when he was laid off in 1955 and came to Winston-Salem. He took a job with McLean Trucking Company as a switcher where he worked for 30 years fulltime.

But, family medical expenses caused him to go back into his old line of work on a parttime basis in 1965. "I said that I needed to start a janitorial service...I bought a '53 panel truck, a mop, and two buckets and two wringers, and that's how I started," he recalled, stating his business start as though it was no major undertaking. In describing how he has generally gone about capitalizing his firm, he said, "I started to get what I could do for myself. I didn't beg anybody for anything. I did what I could do right then. When I needed something else, I got it. I didn't borrow any money."

Timmons has one basic tenet about borrowing from financial institutions in light of the problems that so many African-Americans have when trying to start or expand their businesses. "I think if you pay you bills on time, ...you'll have no problems," he said quickly admitting that his credit record could be described as "squeaky clean." He recalled the time he borrowed \$8,000. "I filled out the application that morning and that next day, I had the money...and that's been almost 20 years ago," he said still proud of his record.

Since the Child Guidance Clinic ("when they were on Reynolda Road," he said), gave him his first cleaning and maintenance contract, Timmons' firm has grown to include six buildings for the Sara Lee Corporation, Container Corporation, the Digital Building

across from Container Corporation, the First Union National Bank building, and Johnson Control off Linville Road. He started his business as a one-person operation, but as it expanded, he added parttime help. "Right now, I have about eight fulltime people, and I have about 60 parttime people," he said. He has between 15-20 clients.

Timmons, who is the oldest of 15 sisters and brothers, grew up wanting to be a doctor, but his family could not afford to send him to school. Although he did not attain a college education, he is a firm believer in it. "I think everybody needs to go to college to get something," he said. His son, David graduated from A&T State University. His daughter, Diane is a graduate of Winston-Salem State University and is a registered nurse.

When his son, Jimmy, asked him whether or not he had to go to college, Timmons had a practical, no-nonsense response. "I said, 'Not really, but when you get out of school, you're going to have to get you a job and go to work...I'm not going to support you.'" He believes, "You owe the world something. The world doesn't owe you anything...Everybody owes the world something."

Perhaps the way he obtained his own expertise before going into business for himself explains what he tells anyone wanting to become an entrepreneur. "I think what they need to do is learn everything with someone who knows what to do. Learn it from them," he advised. He added that developing the ability to make decisions is also important. "I had to make my own decisions. That's for everybody. They got to make a decision, whether it's right or wrong," he explained. He added that in business, having that ability as an owner is part of accepting responsibility. "They (clients) are not going to blame the employee. They're



Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.

James Timmons credits his success to a belief in doing the best job possible.

going to blame the man that signed the contract," he said.

Timmons is proud of the reputation that his industrial cleaning service has earned over the years because of his dedication to providing quality service that is performed by "a carefully trained staff of concerned personnel," as his public relations statement describes his operation. Although he has had opportunities to expand into firms outside of Winston-Salem, he feels that he has enough to manage right here in the city. But, he figures that there is probably more to come. "I think when you do everything that God wants you to do on this earth, it's time for you to leave," he said, indicating that he must not have done everything he's supposed to do because, "I'm still here!"

community mainstay for 40 years

WAAA marks four decades as African-American voice

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"Daddy-O's Patio," Fred "Eddie" Allen, and Larry Williams are just some of the voices from the decades that will be remembered when Radio 980 on the AM dial, WAAA, celebrates its 40th anniversary since it first aired on Oct. 1, 1950. Oldest black-formatted

station in North Carolina and third oldest in the country, the station that has been a focal point of communication in the African-American community will step back for a time at the end of October to reflect on the many changes that have occurred to its listening audience and to the station itself in those four decades of providing entertainment, information, and service.

Originally started by Roger Page, still active in the community, he had the foresight to do what very few people would do in his day, according to Mütter Evans, the youngest African-American owner of a radio station. "You had block programming so you may have at night or weekends six or eight hours of black music but not on a day-in and day-out basis," she recalled. When it began and until two years ago, Triple A was a daytime station from sunrise to sunset.

Forty years ago, "there were few stations...that were 24 hours," Evans said, adding, "FM was unheard of. It wasn't even on the market...It is a thing whose time has come within the last 15 years." For a time during the '60s, the station added FM, 107.5 on the dial, she said. But, the tryout was unsuccessful, and, by the time that Evans joined the station while still a student at Wake Forest University in 1974, the FM frequency had been relinquished.

Playing until midnight is something that Evans is extremely proud of. "That's something that's only been done (recently), something I worked to have happen two years ago," she said. That privilege, granted by the Federal Communications Commission which governs the broadcast media, is one that was hard fought. "What I'm operating now is called 'post-sunset authori-

ty," she explained. "Not all stations got that; not all stations who could have gotten it applied to get it. But, that, too, is something that took some time and some work over the years to push that policy through so that it could get approved here in the United States," she added.

But, Evans would still like to see the station move to 24-hour operation and an upgrade in its 1,000 watt operation, she said, "because the dial places were not all full back then so there was room in between (frequencies) where you could have upgraded without causing interference with another existing station." She added, "I hope it won't be too long before we complete that other six hours, hopefully as we celebrate the 40th anniversary or before celebrating our 41st." She feels that operating around the clock is something that "those loyal fans of Triple A over the years will want to see."

But, being at the 980 frequen-

cy is excellent positioning for the station. "We're midway on the dial, and I'm very proud of that (which) is another indication of how long we've been on the air," Evans said, recalling that over the years the African-American stations that have existed have been in the 1300-1500 frequency range. "That's at the end of the band, and those frequencies really break up more...I'm at 980 with 1,000 watts and there's a world of difference in what the sound and the quality of the sound is if everything else is working as it ought to," she explained.

In describing the events that will highlight the anniversary celebration, Evans said, "We're planning at this point to kick that weekend off with a gospel show on Friday, Oct. 26, at Reynolds Auditorium...featuring Luther Barnes and the Red Budd Gospel Choir, as well as the Sunset Jubilaires, the Truthettes, the Love Community, WCTS, and the Angelic Gospel

Singers." She points out that the Angelic Gospel Singers, founded by Mrs. Margaret Allison in Philadelphia, predate the beginning of the station having begun singing in 1944.

The featured event for Saturday will be a dinner at the M. C. Benton Convention Center. Evans said, "Percy E. Sutton, chairman of Inner City Broadcasting, owner of (New York's) WBLN, responsible for the refunding of the Apollo Theater...and one time a (New York) borough president, has consented to be keynote speaker."

During the festivities, special tribute will be paid to some of the people who have been with Triple A from its inception and who, as Evans described their contributions, "have helped to keep Triple A alive." Folks like Larry Williams, former program director and popular on-air personality will return. There will be a tribute to Daddy-O.

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File Photo

WAAA owner Mütter Evans has big plans for station's upcoming 40th anniversary.

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