Denver's alchemy for success has always been simple: A deep belief in God, a habit of always telling the truth and the dedication to his work as a man to be counted on to get the job done.

By JAMES W. WADE III
Staff Reporter

Taking a look back to the days when everyone inClevelandwas listening to the same radio broadcast, I remember hearing Gospel Music ring out fromCedar Ave.toArlington Ave., with all of us tuned to WABQ, "1540 on your am dial." It was the go-to station for the promotion of upcoming church events.

Unlike a lot of Gospel stations in Detroit who broadcast 24 hours, WABQ received special temporary authority from the FCC to stay on the air overnight in an attempt to help inform and comfort the community following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968. The special authority to remain on the air 24 hours a day expired after just a day or two.

The station became very popular due to the success of a man named Denver Wilborn. He was an up-and-coming Gospel radio announcer employed by WABQ radio. Wilborn was known as the Radio Man and started on WABQ when it was an R&B station when religious

music was only played on Sunday Morning.

When the station was purchased by new owners, he convinced them to turn the station into a full-time religious channel with Gospel Music heard from sunup to sundown. He was a great influence in Gospel Music over the years he was on the air at WABQ.

Denverworked hard and became the General Operations Manager and would sign on with the program title, “The Gospel Train.” Wilborn was faithful to WABQ and had worked for the company for over 40 years in more than one capacity.

Through his community work, Denver orchestrated the first big “Shut In” service with help from doctors, nurses and churches to bring people from nursing homes to an afternoon religious service at the Agora Theater. He raised money to feed the hungry while also raising money for Aid forEthiopia.

With 10 choirs of the city he had the largest religious musical downtown at the convention center titled, “Come on Children Let's Sing.” Knowing a thing or two about traveling, Denver served as host while taking 125 people to the Holy Land. He managed a singing group called the “Angles of Harmony” and wrote several of their songs including “Look the Place Over,” that was recorded by a local group. He co-hosted “Golden Gates of Gospel” a television program with his wife, Lillian Hortense Wilborn.

Denver encouraged many people to go back to school and it would make him very happy when people would come by the station and show him their GED, with some carrying college degrees. Wilborn went to school and earned both a broker's license in real estate and a certification as a travel agent and then opened Wilborn Travel andTours.

In later years, before he retired, every Sunday night he was the voice for the evening broadcast of theMt.GillionBaptistChurchduring the era of the late, great Freddie L. Brown. You could seeDenvercoming out of the broadcast area, meeting and greeting everyone who came by to say hello to him atMt.Gillion.

Denver has received several awards from Civic, Community, and Religious Organizations, and Proclamations from the City and State. He was inducted into the Broadcaster Hall of Fame, and received the AGQC Cornerstone Award from the American Gospel Quartet Convention.

Denver's alchemy for success has always been simple: A deep belief in God, a habit of always telling the truth and the dedication to his work as a man to be counted on to get the job done.