

First Negro Pen Employee Set Enviably Record

By MARJORIE MARLETTE

An enthusiastic man of many parts is leaving the staff of the State Penitentiary this week after:

—Starting a musical instruction program probably unequalled in any prison the same size in the country.

—Handling 350 to 400 interviews a month as institutional parole officer.

—Receiving the accolade of inmates as a "fine human being . . . who gave unselfishly of his time and asked nothing in return but cooperation."

Says Warden Maurice Sigler of Parole Officer Everett Reynolds, "we'll miss him . . . he's made a real contribution here."

Reynolds, the prison's first Negro employee, has been parole officer and music director since January 1962.

In these positions he has had close contact with the inmate population.

Besides regular interviews he talks to another 100 or 200 prisoners in the yard, or in class.

He explains mailing and visiting regulations, parole procedures, compiles case histories, and helps answer questions and solve the personal problems of the men.

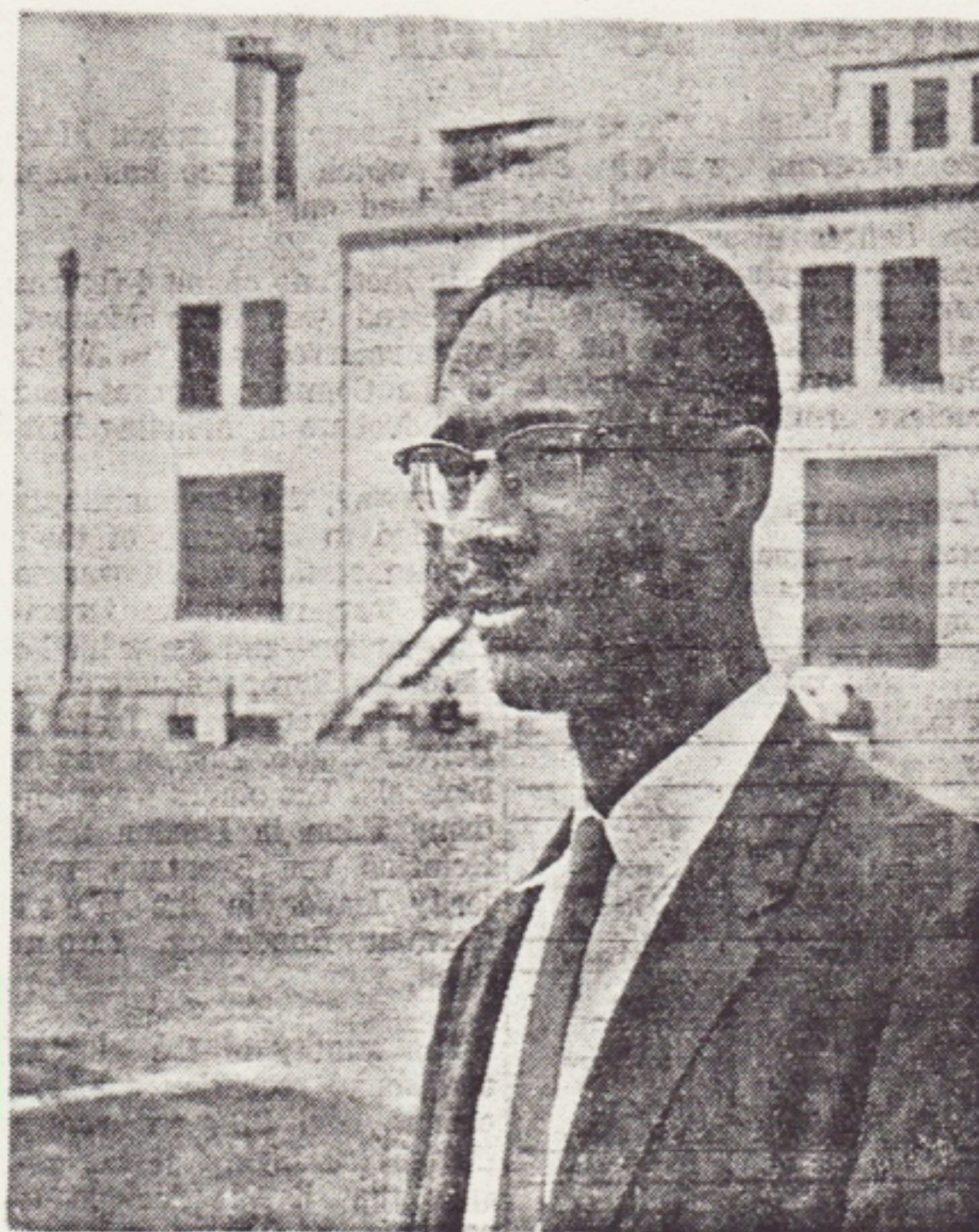
"As parole officers, we're concerned with inmates as individuals," he said.

'Not the Best'

The ordinary background of these individuals is poor, he added. "We do not have society's best here. They do not have well-established homes, many do not work regularly. Many are drinkers."

In music, Reynolds has accomplished a great deal in a short time.

He has set up band courses in which men who have never had any music can, in 2 years, learn to play as other musicians.



Reynolds . . . 'a fine human being.'

"Not many institutions this size have developed the program we have," he said proudly.

He also teaches elementary and advanced theory classes which can earn inmates 5 to 7 credits in the academic school program. For this, he edited and published a theory book especially geared to the limitations of the institution.

There are 125 enrolled in

the music department, and there's no restrictions as to who can be in the band.

"A rare opportunity," the Forum, prison newspaper, declared, noting that "before Mr. Reynolds came to the institution, an inmate had little chance to learn to play an instrument of his choice."

In his prison work, Reynolds has devoted 13 hours

a day, 3 days a week, 8 hours or more the other two (or sometimes 3 or 4.)

Says the Forum: "His charitable approach to a man serving a sentence would have drained the energies of an ordinary man, but his belief that each man should be accorded treatment with undivided consideration caused him to devote more to his job than just 8 hours.

"We sincerely believe that the tolerant touch of Mr. Reynolds has affected the lives of all who have had the pleasure of his acquaintance."

'All Are Good'

While Reynolds was the first Negro officer in the Penal Complex, 10 others have since been added to the staff and "all are good," Warden Sigler says.

The parole officer is leaving with regret. He likes his work at the prison . . . "I've had a good relationship with both the staff and the inmate population.

"And I've learned an awful lot.

"But, he explains, he is also a minister and "I would like to use what I've learned in a more productive way."

Since 1956, Rev. Mr. Reynolds has been pastor of Newman Methodist Church in Lincoln. Beginning July 20, he will become minister of St. Mark's Church in Wichita.

The Rev. Mr. Reynolds, his wife, and 3 sons have found Lincoln "a good home."

"I've had a lot of fine experiences in Lincoln . . . I expect to return," said the man who's been a leader in various community activities since coming here.

"Lincoln," he noted, "doesn't have any problems they can't solve concerning race, alcohol. As the town looks at a problem, it will do more," he concluded.