

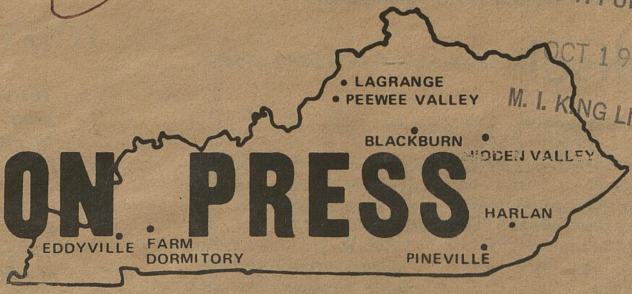
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# INTER-PRISON PRESS



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## An Interview with KSR'S academic principle

By Frederick (Skip) Baker

Mr. David Vislissel has been the Academic School Principal at the Kentucky State Reformatory at La Grange, Kentucky, for approximately seven years. In addition to the many administrative functions in the academic department, he has devoted time in the area of teaching English here at the college level, has been director of the Drama program at K.S.R., and is now a grievance committee chairman. Mr. Vislissel is the long-time advisor of the Resident A-V Center, as well as helping [as he puts it] "in small ways" other organizations at the institution. Mr. Vislissel is married and the father of two children. The following is a brief interview that this reporter had with him recently.

**Inter-Prison Press:** What do you consider the main accomplishments of your past tenure at K.S.R.?

**David Vislissel:** Without doubt, the great chance from large group-taught classes to individualized and programmed approaches (open entry, open exit bases) as much as we can on students needs, capabilities, strengths, etc. Also, the remodeling of the school.

**I.P.P.:** What are some of the things you wish to accomplish in the future as head of the academic department?

**D.V.:** In addition to heavy involvement in refining and modifying our programmed-individualized approach, and Title I and special education programs, I confess to a great love for dramatics; especially the process of a drama group choosing, putting together and performing a play. The process is a fantastic learning experience for all involved. I would also like to see a further development of the arts program, and the formation of a writers workshop and an informal group to explore and develop creative and journalist writing. I just wish I had more time, because I consider these "after-

hours" projects, at least at this time.

**I.P.P.:** After all these years at K.S.R., what is your philosophy of education at K.S.R.?

**D.V.:** More and more, I believe in a practical approach to education. Adults learn (and are motivated) differently from children, with the important starting point that men must see themselves entering school freely but responsibly, and exiting when they wish the same way. Also, (as difficult as it is to really understand and consistently be sensitive to this need), the adults need to see immediate and concrete reasons to be studying and learning what we say is important to learn.

Finally, I think it is essential to be realistic and practical in providing concrete reasons for entering and staying in school, even if these reasons include a warm (or cool) place to study, incentive state pay and teachers sensitive (up to a point) to personal problems which interfere with concentration and learning; and certainly most important, we must keep the real benefits of learning in students' consciousness—in-

creasing literacy and independence, better jobs, and a sense of pride in (self responsible) education.

**I.P.P.:** How many men have completed the G.E. D. phase of the academic program during the last fiscal year (July 1978-June 1979)? How many 8th grade certificates were earned?

**D.V.:** Of the 151 men attempting to pass the G.E.D., 125 men earned G.E.D. certification. Two hundred forty-five men earned the Eighth Grade equivalency certificate.

**I.P.P.:** How many students do you have presently enrolled in the Academic School (all phases)?

**D.V.:** We have a total of 254 students in Academic School, and 54 students are taking full-time (12 credit hours) courses from Jefferson Community College this semester.

**I.P.P.:** Are there special classes for different students? If so, why?

**D.V.:** Yes! We have three levels, or classes, in our Academic School program: The

Reading Center (Zero through sixth grade) with major emphasis on reading skills; the Learning Center (grades six through eight) with major emphasis on reading, mathematics and language; the G.E.D. Center (grades nine through twelve) with five areas of G.E.D. Testing being the main focus. Also, we have a special program known as Title I. This program is primarily designed for those residents under 21 years of age, giving help to students in weak or difficult areas.

We have recently instituted a "special program" for students who have unusual or very difficult problems in learning.

As for our students enrolled in the courses offered by J.C.C. (freshman and sophomore program) the credits earned there can lead to an associate or bachelor's degree. Correspondence courses are available at the resident's expense. A.C.T. testing is also available to the residents.

**I.P.P.:** What are some of your hobbies, and your sign?

**D.V.:** (Laughs). I read in a great variety of areas ranging from Krisnamurti and Gurdjieff, to practical plumbing and How-to-do-it. I love movies (new and old), drama, art and I paint a bit. I like organic gardening, repairing my 80-plus year old Victorian home. Finally, I run and jog some, love handball and spend some time in the wilderness with my wife and kids. Perhaps this confusion of interest will be

explained in my sign—Saggi-tarius, but exactly on the cusp of Capricorn.

**I.P.P.:** In your seven years as principal at the reformatory, has the education level of men entering the academic program increased or decreased?

**D.V.:** An interesting question. We have not studied this formally at K.S.R., but I think that the average academic level at entrance has gone up somewhat over this seven-year period.

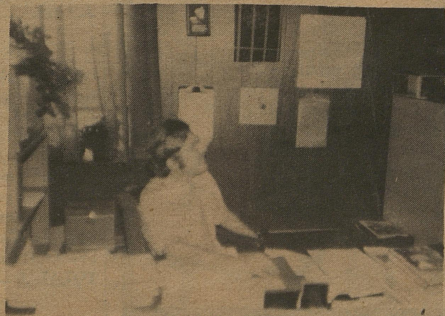
**I.P.P.:** What do you see as the cause of any change in the make-up of the men entering the academic program? What have you changed about the program to reflect these changes?

**D.V.:** I feel the main cause is that more students are volunteering to enroll in academic school. Mr. Mike Price meets with men in the A & O Unit once a week and informs them of our academic education program.

**I.P.P.:** The addition of women to your academic staff: has it had a positive or negative effect on the men?

**D.V.:** Very positive. Women are often very sensitive to a student's problems and approach those problems differently from that of a male teacher. Also, before the women, the atmosphere here was something like the men's college I attended years ago. Men tended to be sloppy,

(continued on page 2)



# Vislisel

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careless in manners and played juvenile games . . . tricks on each other. Now students are more civilized, refined. The presence of women does that to the male ego. It's very health—I think.

**I.P.P.:** Due to the limited number of enrollments you have in the program at any one time, how long can a resident student remain in one level without showing any progress?

**D.V.:** I think we are extremely liberal in working on problems with students. We give them every chance to "take hold" unless there are repeated intentional violations

of agreement. Example: non-attendance, lateness, improper pass use, disturbance in class, etc.

**I.P.P.:** Do you derive a sense of fulfillment from your job?

**D.V.:** Although, like most correctional workers, I almost accidentally came upon this work. I have taught and worked in four other very varied and rewarding situations, and spent the equivalent of over two years in banking work. Work in this situation has been by far the most rewarding I've ever done. I guess that is demonstrated by my over nine years of work with K.S.R. two different times.

## WORDS OF THE MONTH

By Skip Baker, KSR

I frequently sit down and ask myself two questions: What is it you have set out to do? Keep clarifying the goals. And then, am I doing everything possible to reach the goals? Therein lies the road to sanity.

Black people today cannot in through violent confrontation anymore. There are too many legal and moral battles in this country that cannot be won unless Blacks can operate within the system. And to do that, there must be increased education and motivation among Black students. They are the leaders of tomorrow.

## MY LOVE & I

By Dale Allen Hall, KSR

*The midnight sails of the Clipper Ship  
grind through the stormy sea,  
No one to see through the night  
just you "My Love" and me.*

*Although our hearts are filled with love  
as we hear the thunder's boom,  
will we make it through the night  
or will we "My Love" meet doom*

*The waves do crash upon our decks  
but the ship, she rolls along,  
As we hope the storm will break  
before the coming dawn.*

*And with the coming dawn "My Love"  
the storm clouds break apart,  
We stand on deck "My Love" and I  
and let the sunshine fill our hearts . . .*

## I AM PROUD

By Jeannie Stephens, KCIW

*When God made me a Woman,  
He gave me a purpose here below,  
To serve and make my man happy  
To nourish the seed of life that it may grow.*

*He never promised an easy way  
And there's a lot I'll never understand,  
But he made me proud and strong  
That I can handle each new demand.*

*When my feet get weary and I get slow  
And I have a job to do,  
I remember, I am a woman  
And I have strength to pull through.*

# Tag Plant reopens at KSR

By Skip Baker

On September 24, 1979, the Kentucky Bureau of Corrections began making license plates for the State of Kentucky.

Mr. Rex Blaine, director of tags and signs at La Grange Reformatory, said that two shifts will be in operation until late November or early December in order to get all the tags out for 1980.

A total of 77 men are now working at the Tag Plant. The morning shift begins at 8 a.m., and the men work until 3:30 p.m. The evening shift begins at 5 p.m., and the men work until 9 p.m.

The starting wages are 10 cents per hour, but inmates can earn up to 32 cents per hour.

A system of monthly production can increase each inmate's pay as much as seven and one-half cents per hour extra, provided the total output of tags per month exceeds the monthly quota.

Overtime and time and a half benefits are available for 12 men, but hopefully, every inmate that wants to work on weekends will be allowed to work.

All license plates and highway signs are made at La Grange Reformatory for the State of Kentucky.

the kentucky

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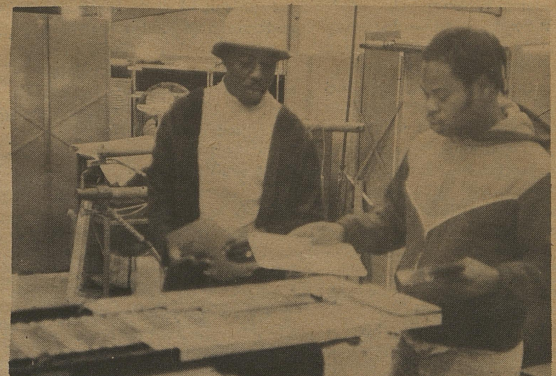
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Inmates produce license plates for 1980 at KSR.

[Photo by Skip Baker]

## POPULATION FIGURES

Kentucky State Penitentiary .....	779
Kentucky State Reformatory .....	1955
Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women .....	114
Blackburn Correctional Complex .....	256
Bell County Forestry Camp .....	70
Harlan County Forestry Camp .....	30
Western Kentucky Farm Center .....	133
Daniel Boone Career Development Center .....	35
Roederer Farm Center .....	148
Frankfort Career Development Center .....	74
TOTAL .....	3594

# KSR'S Living Skills Program

By Frank L. Moorman III

The Living Skills Program at KSR is designed to teach those basic skills which will enable inmates to develop healthy and lasting relationships with those whom they are associated with after their release from prison. Most of these residents have failed in the past to find satisfaction in their associations with family, friends, or other members of their community. They have tended to misunderstand and mistrust most people whom they have encountered or with those they have been associated with in any way. Perhaps many of the residents have failed to develop trust in their fellow man because of experiences during infancy and/or early childhood.

Satisfactory relationships with other people are most important to all human beings. In the course of daily living, one's contacts with others can provide the support, encouragement, self-respect and affection to make his business and social life enhancing or growth experiences. An inability to relate well to others, or attitudes and conduct which alienate them, may result in a poor self-image, a loss of ambition, despondency and greater indifference to the feelings or needs of others. One's view of the world is shaped, to a great extent, by his relationships with his fellow man. Therefore, it is of primary importance that men develop the skills necessary to survive in a world where social relationships invariably determine the measure of success and happiness they can achieve. Without such skills, they may continue to experience difficulties in what seems a hostile and adversary environment.

The Living Skills Program consists of T1, T2 and T3.

T1 is under the direction of Mr. Al Johnson. He has designed T1 around three major areas. Communication, Problem Solving/Decision Making and Planning. These three areas were identified as being the three most significant skills needed by our client population.

Phase One of Communication deals with how one presents himself to other people. It emphasizes how people develop impressions from appearances, posture, facial expressions, gestures, voice and language.

Phase Two of Communication provides insights into how to read other people through observing, listening and evaluating.

Phase Three of Communication shows how to respond to another person after interpretation of the message.

Problem Solving/Decision Making is a process of

determining what choices are available to an individual faced with a problem.

Planning is practice in setting a goal and a schedule in achieving a goal.

Clients are referred to this course by their individual caseworkers. Classes are conducted for a total of 40 hours which is half a day for approximately two weeks. A Pre-test and Post-test is given to each class to gauge the amount of progress. Class size is around fifteen students. Everyday attendance is a must.

T2 is under the guidance of Paula Fitzgerald. These courses are of various lengths and complexity and designed for residents showing interest in specialized skilled acquisition.

The courses offered in T2 are Standard First Aid and Personal Safety, Advanced First Aid and Emergency Care, Banking, Nutrition, Powerlifting and Get Fit for Living.

A recent expansion of the T2 program was the introduction of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Instructor Training.

Twelve men participated in a six week training program and are now certified to instruct Standard First Aid and Personal Safety, Advanced First Aid and Emergency Care and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. Four of these men started instructing classes October 1, 1979. The others will be utilized for later classes. The use of resident instructors is an innovative idea in the field of Corrections.

Paula Fitzgerald has been with the program since April and is pleased with its progress thus far. She feels that as more materials and space are offered, she can continue with its expansion.

T3 is Employability Skills which is designed to help those clients with problems in the areas related to employment. It is constructed to help clients in how to find a job, how to go about getting a job, how to

keep a job, and how to quit a job. One of the major areas discussed throughout this course is how to conduct yourself on an interview with confidence. Residents in this course have mock interviews with local company personnel who visit the institution to help T3 clients in what to expect in actual interviews.

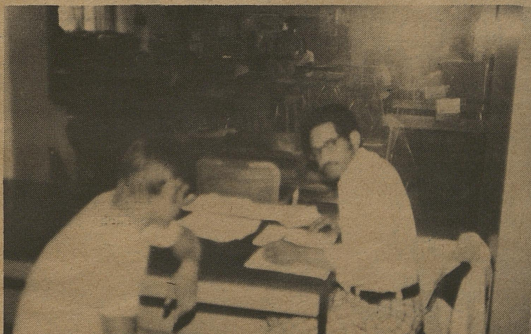
Last June, the T3 program was responsible for putting together a panel discussion under the expertise of Leonard Papproth, a clerk in the Living Skills Program. The purpose of the discussion was to openly discuss in a relaxed atmosphere the problems between the employer and the parolee. A lot of ground was covered and some commitments were made by the people on the panel from the community regarding training programs and interviews that were held.

Clients were referred to this course by their caseworkers. The classes are conducted for a total 40 hours. Pre-test and Post-test are conducted as a guide to measure student progress. A maximum class of 15 clients is maintained and attendance is a must.

Mr. Michael Price serves as administrator of the Living Skills Program and is responsible for the activities and policies of the department. He supervises the training staff and helps develop new programs and evaluates existing ones. He serves as community liaison, provides information regarding the program to other agencies and to the press. He also maintains contact with Community Services. There are demographic studies conducted of the programs by Mr. Price to measure their relative effectiveness.

Mr. Price feels a small measure of satisfaction with the progress that has been made, but he is aware of the fact that much has yet to be done to make the program as effective as he would like it to be.

Rev. Bill Larkin has been very helpful in Level I as he prepares to assign a lesson to a student.



## A message to our readers

We are currently attempting to update our mailing list for the Inter-Prison Press.

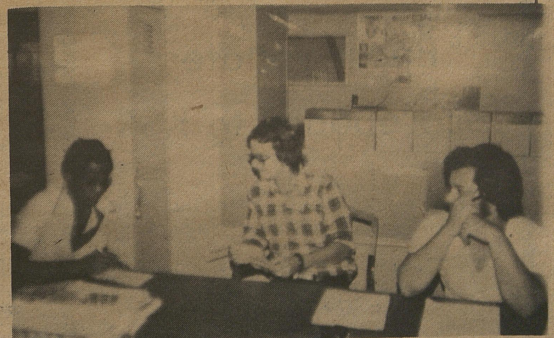
If you would like to remain on our list, please fill out the form below and mail it to the following address by January 1.

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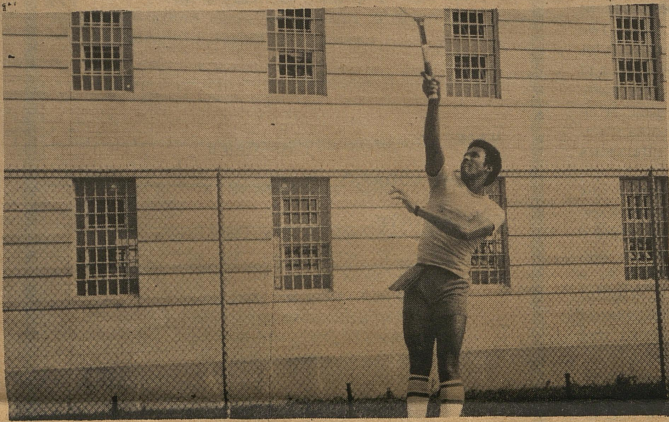
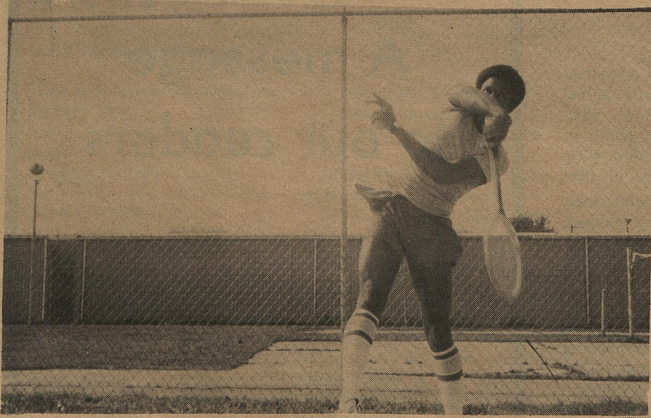
Mike Kinser [center] discusses classroom activities with students.

[Photos by Skip Baker]



Mr. Mike Price, director of Living Skills here at La Grange, goes over some work with his clerk Leonard Papproth.





## Labor Day activities

Larry Lenston serves in the first set of the championship game. Larry won the singles championship by defeating Dennis Elliot 6-2, 6-3, 6-4 [top left]. Larry Lenston returns a volley during the match [bottom left]. Irvin Clark won the mile race easily on Labor Day. Irvin, your stride is too mean [top right].

[Photos by Skip Baker]

## Pepsi donates scoreboard to KSR

The Pepsi Company recently donated an electric scoreboard to the Kentucky State Reformatory.

The new scoreboard will mainly be used by the Varsity Tigers, KSR's basketball team.

According to Reformatory Warden, Steve Smith, the people at the reformatory were very pleased with the donation, and the Varsity Tigers displayed their appreciation by "shooting some baskets" after the presentation.

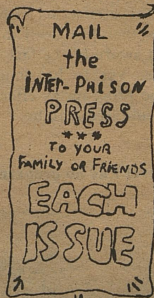
Milton Driskell, account executive for Genadco Advertising Agency, presented Steve Smith with a certificate of guarantee for the new scoreboard. Ray Wilkins of Pepsi, and John Mattingly, recreation director at the reformatory, also attended the presentation.

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