

Fitness instructor demonstrates long-term commitment

by Cathy Heimer

Forty years ago, Edith Turner volunteered to lead an exercise program at the MWR Fitness Center. She was adamant it would be a temporary arrangement until a certified instructor could be found. Turner was so sure it would be for just a short time, she didn't want to be paid. Never interested in the traditional wives' club, Turner had joined the program as a way to get out of the house for a few hours a week, so her main concern was just to keep the class open.

Flash forward to 2004 and the very same Edith Turner is still leading the exercise class at the Oceana PRT Center and she's not just a volunteer, but a paid MWR staff member, complete with the staff polo shirt. Sometime in the 1970s – no one can remember exactly when, Turner realized she was more than just a temporary volunteer and was added to the MWR payroll.

On June 2, Turner was recognized by Oceana MWR Director Jim Lytle and Fitness, Sports and Aquatics Director Gary Thomas for 40 years of commitment. The entire group and others who know Turner well, gathered together in the MWR conference room in building 529 to celebrate Turner's dedication with a proclamation recognizing the "Mature Woman's Exercise Class."

Stop by the PRT Center any Monday, Wednesday or Friday from 9-10 a.m. and the 17 ladies and two instructors who attended regularly can't be missed. They are a lively group – just as much of a social group as a stretching class. The group is composed mainly of women whose husbands have retired from the military, although Turner jokes they have a "youngster – her husband is still on active duty!" As

military wives, they are a diverse group and they joke an "exotic group," with women from France, Japan, Panama, Puerto Rico and Morocco. Many sport matching blue t-shirts and white cotton shorts for the class.

Many of the participants have made exercise a lifetime commitment. While there is no commitment required for those who attend, four of the ladies have participated for more than 20 years and assistant instructor Sergia Suarez has been with the class for 33 years. They have seen their children grow up, their husbands retire from the military and begin second careers. Others have worked full-time jobs and managed to fit the class in when they could.

They also support each other through crisis. Turner herself has taken several months off to recover from first a cornea transplant and later, shoulder surgery, while Suarez led the group in her absence. They celebrate birthdays and frequently go to lunch together, following the class. Their lasting friendships are another benefit of the weekly class.

Turner modestly describes what the ladies do as "low impact exercise with a lot of stretching." But Branch Medical Clinic Oceana Health Promotions Officer Tina Moseley credits Edith's class with inspiring others to become fit, regardless of their age. She said Turner's commitment "speaks volumes for the program."

Moseley explained she has referred many of her patients to the class. "It lets them get comfortable with exercise in an easy setting and then they go onto the other classes and exercise machines in the



Fitness Instructor Edith Turner leads her class through stretching exercises at the PRT Center. Turner began volunteering to teach the class 40 years ago, only planning to help out until MWR could hire an instructor.

Photo by PH2(AW/SW) Narina Larry

Fitness Center." Moseley said clients who need assistance with weight management, reducing cholesterol and those with arthritis have all benefited from exercising with the group.

Turner said the key to any exercise is consistency which she continues to demonstrate. While she admitted she doesn't follow any certain diet and eats whatever she enjoys, she uses regular exercise to stay within her desired weight. She has a treadmill at home and also uses the weight training equipment at the Fitness Center. Turner said she played a lot of golf in the past and she also enjoys bridge, "to keep my mind healthy."

For more information about the class, contact the Oceana Fitness and Sports Center at 433-3302.

Khakis clean up Dam Neck Annex Chapel, Fitness Center

Officers and senior enlisted joined forces to tidy up Dam Neck Annex May 25. During the "Khaki Initiative" participants from Oceana and Dam Neck braved the sun and temperatures in the 90s to clean up spaces around the Fitness Center and Chapel. Left, NAS Oceana Executive Officer Capt. Stuart Bailey clears away overgrown branches from a tree in front of the Fitness Center. Right, Chaplain (Lt. Cmdr.) Tim Oswald peels vines off the wall of the Fitness Center. During the Khaki Initiative the nursery room at the Chapel by the Sea was repainted and maintenance performed on the grounds and parking lot.



Photos by JO3 Amanda Robinson