

## Betty Perkins-Carpenter

*Eighty-four-year-old CEO plans never to retire*

**Q.** How long have you worked with senior citizens?

**A.** I've been working with seniors since 1959. I did a lot of balance exercising in water back then.

**Q.** You are CEO and president of Senior Fitness Inc., which you incorporated in 1986. Can you tell us a bit about your corporation?

**A.** We're training professionals and older adults in the Six Steps to Better Balance.

**Q.** How does "Six Steps to Better Balance" training help seniors—and the others you train—avoid falls or avoid injuring themselves in falls?

**A.** It teaches them to have better balance and to reduce injury if a fall occurs.

The first step is stretching in bed. Stretching in bed especially helps someone that's dealing with arthritis. It's often the most overlooked element in the total picture of overall fitness, because the older we get the more important stretching becomes. You can increase your flexibility in bed, and when you stretch you're also increasing bone density, because when you stretch like that a muscle pulls against bone and you're strengthening bone.

The second step is balance, the third one is bouncing balls, and the fourth one is walking and talking on the telephone indoors. The next one is saving lives all over the country. That's the XX Martini Slump — it tells you how to fall safely.

The last one is dancing with a pillow. When they're dancing with the pillow, they're going forward backward sideways and in circles, and there's no fear of falling. The music takes them to another time, another place. I had over 100 dancing in the grass at [YMCA] Camp Arrowhead.

**Q.** What kinds of people take Six Steps training?

**A.** I've trained many doctors, nurses, PTs, [physical therapists] OTs, [occupational therapists] and other people. I trained the fire department in Dade County, Miami, a long time ago. I've been out to Portland, Oregon. I trained the Upstate New York Psychiatric Hospital's staff. I just trained teachers for the Seneca Indian nation, and they're teaching the classes. I go to independent living centers to actually do a class in the Six Steps. Wherever we have a class in the Six Steps, we have waiting lists of at least 30-plus people. The Six Steps are fun. That's why they're so successful.

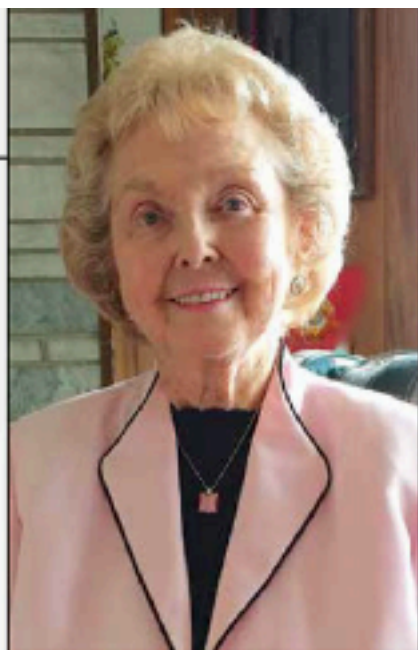
**Q.** In 1976, you traveled to Montreal as coach of the Turkish Olympic Diving Team. How did you come to coach that team?

**A.** The Turkish Olympic Committee invited me to be their Olympic coach. It's a four-year commitment — you don't just go to the Olympic games. I had to go to the Mediterranean games in North Africa with the team, [and] Bucharest [Rumania] for the Balkan games. It was the first time Turkey ever had divers at the Olympic games.

**Q.** For four years, you served on what is now called the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition.

**A.** It was under President Reagan and President Bush senior. The role of the council is to instill physical fitness and activities in all ages. When you're on the council you're sort of a leader in the whole nation in physical fitness, and getting people moving.

**Q.** You are an Air Force veteran who served during the Korean



War. Recently, you took on the task of helping to identify US servicemen and women who served in the Korean War, and are shown in a stack of photos from that war. Could you tell us about that project?

**A.** It's called "Snapshots from the Korean War." The commander of my veterans post, Korean War Veterans Association Monroe County Chapter 1, gave me almost 300 pictures from the war. They are eight-by-10 black-and-white glossies from June, July and August in 1950. I chose to identify the people in them.

**Q.** The photos are on [koreanwar.democratandchronicle.com](http://koreanwar.democratandchronicle.com). What can those who think they have identified someone in a photo do to be sure their relative, friend, etc. is that person?

**A.** They can just call me [and] send me a picture. I have to match it.

**Q.** What happens if it is a match?

**A.** I send them the original photo. I found a man who turned out to be a prisoner of war.

**Q.** At 84, you sustain a level of activity that would exhaust many. Do you ever plan to slow down?

**A.** They tell me, "When are you going to retire?" My answer is, "Never?"

*Editor's Note: To contact Perkins-Carpenter about the Korean War photos, call 585-586-7548.*