Guy H. Simmons, Jr., PhD – Bluegrass Medical Physicist

Peter Sandwall, Ashley Cetnar, Ahmet Ayan, Kevin Little, Dennis Cheek, Joshua Hessler, Michael Lamba, & Christopher Njeh
Ohio River Valley Chapter, American Association of Physicists in Medicine

Abstract

Dr. Guy Held Simmons is a pioneer of nuclear medicine physics. Beyond professional achievements in developing technology, educational, and quality assurance programs, Dr. Simmons was a treasured and trusted friend who developed lifelong relationships. Dr. Simmons started his professional career in Cincinnati, Ohio where he studied under Dr. Jim Kereiakes while helping to develop the first Bachelor’s degree program in Nuclear Medicine technology.

Following completion of his PhD at the University of Cincinnati, Dr. Simmons was offered a position at the University of Kentucky (UK) to serve under a dual appointment to the College of Medicine and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). While working at UK, Dr. Simmons helped develop the first certification exam for the American Board of Nuclear Medicine. He was an early contributor to the use of computers in nuclear medicine. Among many professional roles, Dr. Simmons served as President of Ohio River Valley Chapter (ORVC) of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) (1974-75) as well as the national organization (1985).

A career public servant, Dr. Simmons “retired” after thirty-one combined years of service with the United States Public Health Service and the VA. Retaining his academic appointment at UK, Dr. Simmons started another chapter in his career founding a successful radiological physics consultant that he would continue to serve the region for 25 years. During his distinguished career, he developed strong friendships with fellow luminaries, many lasting 40 or more years. Dr. Simmons is known as a true friend with a terrific sense of humor; soft spoken with “strong hands and an iron will.” His professional work has been an exemplary profession and he has set a personal example for us all with his modesty and integrity.

Origin & Family

Guy Held Simmons, Jr., was born in a small town in Mercer county, Pennsylvania near the seat of Lebanon, October 18, 1936. Guy’s parents were from North Central Pennsylvania and his early memories were born in a tent that they had established through the property. Guy was raised with his sister, 3½ years his senior, who would go on to obtain a grade degree in education. His family career focused on special education. When Guy was 4 years old, his family moved to Indianapolis.

Guy’s father grew up in a large family of farmers and learned to farm from his own father, Jake. His grandfather, also Jake, had begun a farm in 1908 in Indianapolis, during the depression, farming the city’s waste. During this time, Guy’s family worked their land by hand and with a run-down horse pulling a人权. As the Depression worsened, the product of the family’s farm went from making barely enough to live on. In 1945, when Guy was 9 years old, his father bought the farm in Kentucky where they both lived and left home. Guy grew up working on the farm, raising cattle, tobacco, and grain. Working alongside his father, he learned important life lessons from his grandfather, a hard worker, and his father an equally hard worker.

Guy met his first wife Janet in Southern California during his “wonderful” years. Married in 1959 for 24 years. They had 5 children together, 2 boys and 3 girls. Tracy, Scott, David, Sarah, and Lydia. Their eldest daughter Tracy had Dr. Simmons syndrome and passed away at the age of 24 in 1981. Their second daughter Sarah worked for a local agency performing outreach work for the city of Cincinnati. Each of their children, at one point or another, lived with a different part of the world. Guy’s daughter Tracy died of cancer which he has donated her brain with 7 grandchildren and nearly (16 months) one great-grandchild, Ava.

Guy enjoys working on projects alongside his family and playing with his fox, boa, boar, and a basset hound. Comfortable taking turns on a country road, riding only moderately increased his speed of travel. Scott modulo summer road trips to a farm in the AAPM, where they would spend time with family friends Joe Windham and Bill Windham. The family would play croquet and badminton, and spend time around the campfire with friends and family. He was introduced to his second wife, Pat, on blind date set up by a former student, they were married in 1989.

Dr. Simmons was recognized as the first nuclear medicine physicist in UK for 1972. UK had invited the VA to help with their VA hospital, helping locally funding. At the time, the VA had purchased a whole body counting device, installed after a unit in Oak Ridge. Dr. Simmons was given responsibility for pitting the unit operational.

The acquisition, design, testing, and advancement of equipment is not possible without an interest in physics. Dr. Simmons developed a new unit of a scintillation detector, moving back and forth the patient was transferred underneath.

Wendy Berry stated it well. “We have neglected the truth that a good farmer is a craftsman of the highest order, a kind of artist.”

While not a farmer of the land like his father and grandfathers, Dr. Simmons is indeed a farmer, of ideas and friendships. He tilled the soil that we stand on, allowing us to benefit from the fruits of his labor, while sowing the seeds of long-lasting friendships he continues to enjoy today.

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