

A Look Back at a 45 Year Medical Career

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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The year was 1973. America was in the midst of the Watergate scandal, an energy crisis, and trying to bring an end to its involvement in Vietnam while the Cold War still raged.

1973 was also the year Mike Simmons went to work at OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria, Illinois as an x-ray technologist.

Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen had discovered the medical use of X-rays in medical imaging in 1895. In 1971, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (CT scan) helped forever change the way medical diagnoses were made.

OSF Saint Francis got its first CT scanner – the first in downstate Illinois - in 1976 with an MRI machine following less than a decade later.

Mike Simmons was there for all of it, transitioning from x-ray to CT to MRI tech over the course of his career.

SOT Mike Simmons -

(When we first started there was very few modalities - you had you had x-ray, nuclear medicine, angiography and that was about it. Now we have so many more testing procedures we can do. You can do a sono, you can do CT, can do MRI, there so many ways they can diagnose and find out what's going on a lot quicker than before. :27)

As he prepares to retire at the end of July following a 45-year career, Mike often offers advice and guidance to new imaging techs. He says they have to learn so many more things than back in his early days because of the increased intricacy in the various imaging processes.

While he enjoyed all three, doing MRIs was what he liked best because there are so many factors that go into each image which adds to the complexity of the job.

He thinks back to his early days, which often had long hours, much like a medical resident.

SOT Mike Simmons -

(After two years of x-ray training you had so much on the job training, then you were a full-fledged tech so it was quite intense. :10)

Mike remembers working with Sisters from the The Third Order of St. Francis in the radiology department back in the day. He says they were very dedicated women who gave up everything to work with patients, which he respected immensely.

Mike jokes that OSF HealthCare has truly been a family business for him. One of his sisters still works as a nurse, another was an x-ray tech for over 30 years, while his wife (who he met on the job) and son both still work there. Combined they have more than 170 years at OSF!

When he looks back on his career – and thinks about his pending retirement – in addition to his co-workers, it's the patients he will miss the most. He also leaves behind words of wisdom cultivated over 45-years.

SOT Mike Simmons -

(Quality takes time. I've said that for years. Don't rush patients. Take your time. You may do 10 of them that day, but this is the only one they're going to get done for a long time or maybe the first time. So they need your tender care and also, treat them as people. :23)