

In 1964 Murray State University hired its first athletic trainer. Tom Simmons came to Murray State and effectively brought sports medicine to Western Kentucky. At the time of his hiring, there were only two other people employed as athletic trainers in the state, at the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville. Not only that, but there were no orthopedic surgeons in Murray, no physical therapists and no emergency medical service.

Tom is originally from Detroit, Michigan, where he grew up and attended the University of Detroit. While there he not only worked with the university's athletes but had the unique opportunity to work with the Detroit Lions of the NFL and the Detroit Pistons of the NBA. After graduating he had a short stint at the United States Military Academy before coming to Murray State. Tom has also worked with the Buffalo Bills of the NFL. He received his Master's Degree from Murray State and began a lifetime of service to MSU and the community. Service to others is a trademark characteristic of athletic trainers that Tom wore like a comfortable shirt. When there was no one to take care of the local high school athletes, he was there. Many times that meant working Friday night and Saturday games. When Kentucky started the Bluegrass State Games, Tom was there, with the others that volunteered their time to serve the people and promote athletic training around the state.

Tom taught athletic training at the university in his training room and anywhere else he could, such as the Cramer Student Trainer Workshops. Many student athletic trainers have rolled through his training room. None left without learning valuable lessons, both about athletic training and life.

He was a charter member of KATS and worked with the other athletic trainers in the state to successfully pass one of the first practice acts for athletic trainers in the United States. In 1990, Tom was elected to the Murray State Athletic Hall of Fame. He retired in 1993 after 27 years of service in the athletic department and 29 years of teaching. That year he was awarded the District Award from the Southeast Athletic Trainers Association. In 1994, Murray State dedicated its Stewart Stadium Athletic Training Facility, the Tom "Doc" Simmons Training Room. In 1997 he was awarded the NATA Athletic Trainer Service Award. There is a KATS Award named in his honor, recognizing athletic trainers that give long service to the state and retire from the position of athletic trainer.

Tom and his wife Margaret raised two children, Mark and Mary Jo. Tom passed away on December 17, 2008.