

Mona Simpson

Mona Penelope Simpson (née **Olsen**), also known as **Sunny**^[1] (March 15, 1923 - May 11, 2002)^{[2][3]} was the mother of **Homer Simpson**, mother-in-law of **Marge Simpson**, paternal grandmother of **Bart**, **Lisa** and **Maggie Simpson** and ex-wife of **Abraham Simpson II**.

Personality

Mona was strong-willed, righteous and caring, always doing what she knew or thought was the right thing no matter what. She cherished the relationship she had with her son and later her grandchildren and daughter-in-law. Despite her friendly nature, she was shown to hold distaste for her ex-husband and Homer's father Abe due to his irritability, intolerance and questionable parenting methods concerning their son, even berating him for telling Homer she had died. She also disapproved of those with ill intentions, as seen when she joined a radical group protesting biological warfare experiments and other unscrupulous activities by **Charles Montgomery Burns**.

Overall, she seemed to bring out a more vulnerable side of Homer reminiscent of the innocent child he was before she left.

Early Years

Mona Olsen was born March 15, 1923. In the 1949 she married **Abraham Simpson II**.

At some point after her marriage she learned that Abe fathered **Herbert Powell** with a carnival worker named **Gaby**. Shortly after Homer was born, she made him promise to never talk about the incident at the carnival as she wanted Homer to grow up respecting his father.^[4] However, she often found herself looking out for Homer while Abe could've cared less due to the circumstances of his conception,^[5] much to her dismay.

Mona Penelope Simpson



During the 1960s while Homer was a child, she became increasingly involved in hippie movements and political activism. She cited **Joe Namath's** long hair during Super Bowl III as igniting her beliefs. She takes Homer and Abe to **Woodstock**, where Homer ended up being influenced by hippies. Unfortunately, her frequent protesting eventually led to Homer developing his eating disorder to cope with her absence.^[6] She and other activists protesting germ research enter a facility owned by Mr. Burns, destroying all the biological warfare experiments and curing **Clancy Wiggum** of asthma. While escaping, she made the mistake of stopping to tend to Burns who threatened her with arrest. She then left her husband and son, with Abe telling Homer that she had died while he was at the movies. Abe even goes as far to point out a grave, telling him it was Mona's, although the grave actually belonged to **Walt Whitman**. Almost a week prior to Mona's departure, Abe took Homer on a fishing trip that ended with Homer nearly drowning, but Abe rescued him and took him back home. This resulted in a brief reconnection between Mona and Abe.^[7] Unfortunately, they went back to bickering amongst themselves when Mona revealed she only married Abe to get back at her mother.^[8]

After leaving **Springfield**, her exact movements are unknown, although it is later revealed she resided at the hippie commune **Groovy Grove Natural Farm** for several years, painting murals of Homer.^[9] She sent Homer care packages each week, although Homer was unaware of this, because of his refusal to tip his letter carrier, only collecting the packages many years later.^[10] During this time, she also cheated on Abe, having a *ménage à trois* relationship at Groovy Grove with **Seth** and **Munchie**, who later fondly remembered her as a "pretty groovy chick" and "a demon in the sack", with Abe humorously remaining oblivious to this fact despite being present during the hippies' reminiscence.^[9] Abe remained unaware of her whereabouts throughout all these past events.

She was found in Utah by Abe and Homer, but he lost her to save his dad. She was the disguised pediatrician for Bart after he was born.

Return to Springfield

When Homer faked his own death to avoid work, Mona hears of her son's death on the news and visits her son's still open grave, finding Homer in the grave, who accidentally fell in. She initially told him off for lying in her son's grave until both realized who the other was, with her also learning from Homer how the latter thought *she* had died. She returns to the **Simpson house**, spending time with Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie. She meets Abraham again, although Abraham continues to harbor resentment over her leaving him and Homer. Mona gets angry after learning he had told Homer she was dead although Abraham states to her that he did not want Homer to find out about the fact that she was a wanted criminal on the run for 27 years. When Homer and Mona go to the post office, to collect years worth of care packages, she is spotted and recognized by Burns. Mona is forced again to leave Springfield, on the run from the police, although the now Police Chief, **Clancy Wiggum**, aides her escape as she had helped cure his asthma.^[10]

Second return to Springfield

Sometime later, Homer discovers a hidden message in a newspaper, left by his mother, to meet her under a bridge. Homer and Bart do so and reunite with Mona, although she is discovered by the police

at a diner and is arrested, later put on trial. She is acquitted because of evidence given by Homer, although she is later imprisoned, thanks to Mr. Burns, for signing into a federal park under a false name. Homer attempts to break his mother out of prison on a prison bus, with a police chase ensuing. The chase ends when she apparently dies, after the bus drives off a cliff and into some water, where it explodes, which sets off a rock avalanche, burying the bus. Mona narrowly escapes the bus before it went off the cliff. She again goes on the run, where she sends another hidden message in a newspaper to Homer, written while eating a Rhode Island-style clam chowder.^[11]

Final return and death

Mona returns to Springfield again, visiting Homer. Homer has grown sick of his mother's constant leaving and returning and refuses to reconcile with her in order to keep himself from feeling hurt. Later, feeling guilty, he attempts to apologize to his mother, only to find out she had passed away sitting in front of the fireplace.

She is cremated and, sometime after her cremation, the **Simpson family** watches her recorded will. She leaves Bart her Swiss-army knife, Lisa her rebellious spirit (although Lisa takes her earrings), and Marge an old purse made of hemp, asking Homer to release her ashes from the top of a specific mountain at 3:00 pm. Homer completes his mother's wish, releasing the ashes, which are sucked into a missile launch computer within the mountain, owned by Mr. Burns. The ashes stop the missile from launching, preventing the **nuclear power plant's** waste from being blasted to the Amazon rain forest. Homer is arrested but manages to escape, with help from Marge, Bart and Lisa, destroying the base and fulfilling his mother's final wish.^[12]

Homer's dreams

Mona continues to live on in Homer's dreams. When Homer develops a bed wetting problem after taking Bart on a fishing trip (which brought back his memory of his disastrous fishing trip with Abe), the rest of the family ventures into his dreams to find the cause of the problem. Eventually, they come across Mona after she saves them, under the guise of Death, from being crushed by a pair of gears. She provides them the answer to Homer's bed wetting problem via movie theater. Mona also tells Homer that he misinterpreted everything that happened between her and Abe after the fishing trip and shows him a video of what really happened. She tells Homer she will always live on in his memory along with younger versions of Homer and Abe. She then tells them to leave the dreams and to wake up, with Homer saying goodbye to his mother one last time. Homer's dream then collapses (due to **Jonathan Frink** and Wiggum fighting), and he and the rest of the family return to the real world.

Physical Appearance

Mona had straight, light blue hair as well as the distinctive large, round eyes and small, rounded nose typical of Simpson family members. However, in flashbacks she was shown to have dyed her hair maroon.

Behind the Laughter

Creation

Prior to **the seventh season**, Mona Simpson had only made two brief flashback appearances, the first being **Season 2's "Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?"**, appearing again in the **sixth season** episode "**Grampa vs. Sexual Inadequacy**" (albeit without her face shown). In both episodes she was voiced by **Maggie Roswell** (she was also mentioned in Season 1 as calling Homer a disappointment, very contrary to her normal behavior).^[13]

Mona's first major appearance was in **the seventh season** episode "**Mother Simpson**," which was pitched by **Richard Appel**, who was desperately trying to think of a story idea and decided that he had to really reach for an idea and decided to do something about Homer's mother, who previously had only been mentioned once.^[14] The writers used the episode as an opportunity to solve several little puzzles, such as where Lisa's intelligence came from.^[14]

The character is named after **Richard Appel's** wife, whose maiden name is Mona Simpson.^[14] Mona Simpson was designed in a way so that she has a little bit of Homer in her face, such as the shape of her upper lip and her nose.^[15] There were several design changes because the directors were trying to make her an attractive older and younger woman, but still be Simpson-esque.^[15]

The inspiration for the character comes from Bernardine Dohrn of the far-left revolutionary group Weather Underground, although the writers acknowledge that several people fit her description.^[16] Her crime was intentionally the least violent crime the writers could think of, as she did not harm anyone and was only caught because she came back to help Mr. Burns.^[16]

Glenn Close, who was directed in her first performance by **Josh Weinstein**,^[16] was convinced to do the episode partially because of **James L. Brooks**.^[17] When Mona gets in the van, her voice is done by **Pamela Hayden** because **Glenn Close** could not say "d'oh!" properly^[16] and thus they used the original temp track recorded by Hayden.^[14]

Mona was originally voiced by **Maggie Roswell**, before **Glenn Close** took over in the episodes "**Mother Simpson**", "**My Mother the Carjacker**", "**Mona Leaves-a**" and "**How I Wet Your Mother**". **Tress MacNeille** voiced her flashback appearance in the episode "**D'oh-in' in the Wind**". **Pamela Hayden** has also voiced Mona, due to Glenn Close's inability to properly say 'D'oh'.

Development

Glenn Close recorded original material for another episode, **season fifteen's "My Mother the Carjacker"**, and a deleted scene featuring Mona from "**Mother Simpson**" appeared in **season seven's "The Simpsons 138th Episode Spectacular"**. Mona also had a speaking appearance in **season ten's "D'oh-in' in the Wind"** episode, this time voiced by **Tress MacNeille**. **Glenn Close** returned as Mona for the third time in the nineteenth season episode "**Mona Leaves-a**".^[18]

Reception

"Mother Simpson" is one of **Bill Oakley** & Josh Weinstein's favorite episodes, as they feel it is a perfect combination of real emotion, good jokes and an interesting story^[19] and they have expressed regret about not submitting it for the Emmy Award in the "Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program (For Programming less than One Hour)" category^[16]

IGN.com ranked Glenn Close's two performances as Mona as the 25th best guest star in the show's history.^[13] In 2007, *Entertainment Weekly* called **Glenn Close** one of "fourteen guest stars whose standout performances on TV make us wish they'd turn up in a *Simpsons Movie 2*."^[20]