

Homer's Home

Homer Simpson is a man of simple pleasures — all of which he can easily find in his hometown of Springfield.
By Joseph Guinto



Homer Simpson, holding a mug of Duff beer in one hand and a jelly donut in the other, sits in a dark corner of the bar between two unattractive men who seem to be waiting for him to say something. But he says nothing. Inside Moe's Tavern, a landmark dive in the town of Springfield, he is staring through the smoke and semidarkness at a jar of pickled eggs that appears to be so old the bar may have been built around it. The two men with him, Lenny and Carl, know that it can be pointless to force conversation upon Homer when he is in this nearly catatonic state, a tiny glint of drool hanging from the corner of his mouth. But I do not. I'm a newcomer to Springfield and to Moe's, and I have come here hoping to speak with Homer, a man who has dominated this town's headlines ever since his birth was greeted in the *Springfield Shopper* with the front-page proclamation: "Unusually Large, Ugly Baby Born."

Homer Simpson has made even more news since then, for he has been involved with many things involving many people here in Springfield — his own snowplow business, his successful recording career, his work on behalf of the local church as a missionary in the South Pacific, his stint as Springfield's chief of police, his role as curator of the now-defunct Museum of Hollywood Jerks. And that's just the beginning. Homer Simpson has been a blackjack dealer, a pin monkey at the bowling alley, a baseball mascot, and a film producer. He's also faced off against the heavyweight champion of the world, stopped a stampeding elephant,

rough-and-tumble frontiersman. (Jeb-diah Springfield is noted for, among other things, having killed a bear with his bare hands. Typical.) No, Springfield is unique not for its history but for its topography. As soon as you step off the plane at the Springfield Airport, you find yourself calling the landscape simply "impossible." On one end of town, there are enormous purple mountains, a lake, a lush national forest, and even a glacier. Yet, nearby, there is also a desert. At the other end of town, there is an oceanfront and a Squidport. Somewhere in between, a fire has raged at the Springfield Tire Yard since either 1966 or 1989.

"I have pursued Homer for weeks, trying to get him to say a few words about Springfield. He has been surprisingly difficult to reach."

and both averted and nearly caused a meltdown at the nuclear power plant where he works when he's not engaged in some entrepreneurial endeavor. Indeed, it seems that Homer is a man who can do anything he wants. Anything.

For the moment, though, what he wants does not include speaking to me. I have pursued Homer for weeks, trying to get him to say a few words about his hometown of Springfield. He has been surprisingly difficult to reach. But I've finally found him, here at Moe's, and as soon as I can get up the courage, I'm going to ask him about the extraordinary place where he lives.

In some ways, Springfield isn't unusual. It's a frontier city, and, like other American frontier cities, it was founded by a

No one is entirely sure.

Maybe Homer knows. But now, sitting at this bar, which is in uncomfortable proximity to schools and a church, Homer Simpson seems miles away, in his own private world, not even reacting when the jukebox suddenly switches to a song Homer wrote, "Everybody Hates Ned Flanders." It is a lovely ballad that he first recorded four years ago. The lyrics are simple, yet the song still manages to evoke loneliness and sensuality:

*"Everybody in the USA
Hates their stupid neighbor.
He's Flanders and he's really, really lame!"*

As the tune plays, I chat with one of

Homer's closest friends, the saloonkeeper, Moe Szyslak. "Hi, my name's Moe," he says, "or, as the ladies like to refer to me, 'Hey, you in the bushes.'" I ask Moe why there is virtually no one in the bar I've heard so much about, a place that was once so popular that people would push or wedge their way in, nesting between the elbows and backsides of men drinking three-deep at the bar. Aero-smith even played a gig here. But tonight, to paraphrase a line from that great Frank Sinatra song, there's no one in the place except Homer, Lenny, Carl, Moe, and me — and also a guy named Barney who may or may not have passed out. Moe explains that the lack of patrons is not an adequate reflection of the vibrancy of Springfield's nightlife — although he doesn't say that in quite so many words. "People today are healthier and drinking less," Moe says. "You know, if it weren't for the junior high school next door, no one would even use the cigarette machine."

After a while, I ask Moe if there is something wrong with Homer. Maybe Homer Simpson has a cold, like the aforementioned Sinatra did in that famous 1966 *Esquire* story. That's not it, I'm told. Homer isn't sick. He's not sad. He's just happily daydreaming about food. Indeed, as I make my way over to him, I'm almost certain that I can hear Homer mumbling either "Mmm, maca-ma-damia nuts" or "Mmm, pie pants." Possibly both.

Whichever it is, Homer actually doesn't seem thrilled that I have interrupted his mental buffet. But when I buy him a Duff, he agrees to talk about himself and what he thinks makes Springfield so spectacular.

Homer, you've got a wife, Marge, and three kids — Bart, Lisa, and Maggie. Is it hard for you to juggle your diverse professional responsibilities with your duties to your family?

First of all, I know the names of my children, except sometimes the baby's. Second of all, your question gives me a good idea. Become a circus juggler. Next question.

Would you say Springfield is a good place to raise a family?

It's the best. It's the lowest point in the state, so all the lost balls roll down to us.

You're quite a traveler. You've been all over the world — Washington, D.C.;

Ngorongoro, Tanzania; Toronto, Canada; even Itchy & Scratchy Land. What is it about Springfield that makes you keep coming back?

This little baby here: a court-ordered ankle bracelet. It gives me a shock if I'm out of the area for more than a week.

You once faced off against a tricky cat burglar. And Sideshow Bob once tried to flood the town. Is Springfield a safe place to visit now?

It's very safe ... between January 22 and January 24. Otherwise, stay away. I'm warning you.

Are there any special places you like to retreat to, just by yourself?

I like the quiet peace inside the sliced-meat cooler at the Kwik-E-Mart.

There is a lake and a river and what seems to be an oceanfront in Springfield. There's also a gorge, a national forest, a mountain range, a glacier, and the Alkali Flats, known as the Springfield Badlands. What do you make of the city's amazingly diverse topography?

I've crashed my car into all of them. Once, I even did it sober.

He Said ...

Here are the spots that score points with Homer Simpson when he's home in Springfield.

DINING

The Frying Dutchman seafood restaurant, seafood, moderate.

NIGHTLIFE

Moe's Tavern, inexpensive.

SHOPPING

Kwik-E-Mart
Goodwill

SPORTS

Isotope Stadium
Bowl-a-Rama
Sir Putts-a-Lot Merrie Olde Fun Center

ATTRACTIONS

South Street Squidport

Speaking of the ocean, do you have a favorite beach in Springfield?

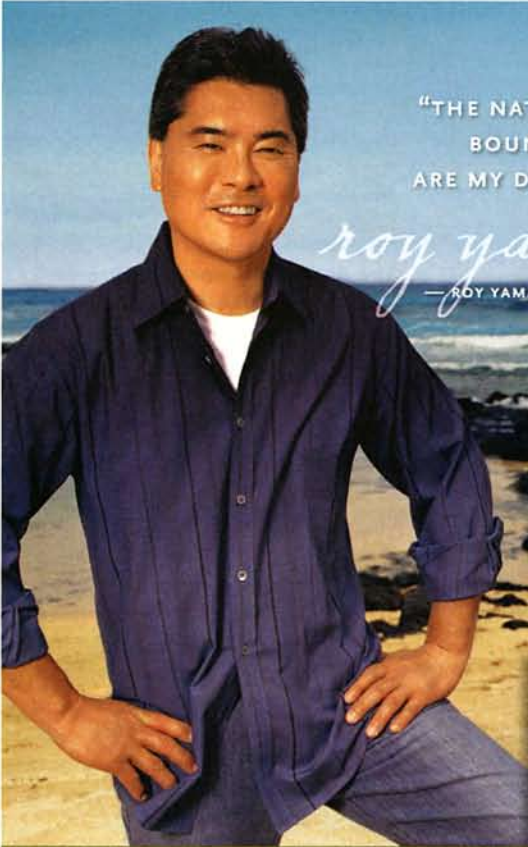
Springfield's famous nude beach. But how come I'm always the only guy who's nude there?

You're clearly a man who enjoys a good meal. You must have some favorite restaurants. Where do you go for breakfast?

For a casual breakfast, nothing beats the friendly atmosphere of Flanders's kitchen before he wakes up.

How about a power lunch?


I sneak away to Cooling Tower One at the nuclear plant. Lunch doesn't get more "power" than that. [Homer laughs for 15 minutes.]



"THE NATURAL BEAUTY AND BOUNTY OF HAWAII ARE MY DAILY INSPIRATION"

roy yamaguchi

— ROY YAMAGUCHI, CHEF + FOUNDER



— MACADAMIA NUT MAHI MAHI —

Roy's®

hawaiian fusion cuisine

AZ CHANDLER PHOENIX SCOTTSDALE | CA LA JOLLA LOS ANGELES NEWPORT BEACH
RANCHO MIRAGE SAN FRANCISCO WOODLAND HILLS | FL BONITA SPRINGS JACKSONVILLE BEACH
NAPLES ORLANDO SARASOTA TAMPA | GA ATLANTA | HI HAWAII (BIG ISLAND) KAUAI MAUI OAHU
IL CHICAGO | MD BALTIMORE | NV LAS VEGAS SUMMERLIN | PA PHILADELPHIA | TX AUSTIN DALLAS

FOR RESERVATIONS PLEASE VISIT: ROYSRESTAURANT.COM



Diamonds & Enamel



18kt. Yellow Gold Heart Earrings, Charms and Rings in pink, red or blue enamel with diamonds.

Available at Fine Jewelry and Specialty Stores.
Visit our website for a location near you.
www.amaliajewelry.com

La Zahav USA, Inc.
36 NE 1st Street, Suite 210 - Miami, FL 33132
Tel (305) 373-3411 • Fax (305) 373-7798
e-mail: info@lazahav.com

CELEBRATED WEEKEND

We Said ...

Here are the spots that score points with us when we're in Springfield.

LODGING

Hotel Pillowmint, very expensive. The Who stayed here when they came to town to play a concert at Yahoo Search Engine Arena.

DINING

Bob's Big Poi, Hawaiian, moderate.

Have It Uruguay, South American, inexpensive.

La Snotteria, Franco/Californian/Italian, expensive.

Professor P.J. Cornucopia's Fantastic Foodmagorium and Great American Steakery, everything, inexpensive.

SHOPPING

The Android's Dungeon & Baseball Card Shop. Best. Store. Ever. Pick up an issue of *Radioactive Man*, no. 72.

The Leftorium. A store owned by Ned Flanders, it stocks products exclusively for left-handers.

SPORTS

Noiseland Video Arcade. This joint at the Springfield Mall caters to the inactive sports fan.

ATTRACTIONS

The Springfield Knowledgeum. Its slogan is "Where science is explained with brightly colored balls."

NIGHTLIFE

Stu's Disco. Disco isn't dead after all, thanks to owner Disco Stu, who once famously said, "Disco Stu likes disco music."

And what about a fancy dinner? What do you think is the classiest joint in all of Springfield?

Whatever place won't let me in.

Springfield has a country club with a golf course. Do you ever hit the links there?

No, I really don't like sports that don't make you work up a sweat. That's why I prefer drunken bowling.

What about shopping? We know there are stores along the riverfront. What are some of the good ones?

Springfield has some of the best shopping in the world. You can buy beer almost anywhere in town, including at many banks and churches. For fashion, Marge and I like to go "Goodwill hunting." I don't know why we call it that; we both hated the movie.

What would you tell someone visiting Springfield for the first time to do while they are here?

I would advise not coming after dark. In fact, you probably shouldn't come at all. But if you must, my top three attraction picks are the South Street Squidport, Isotope Stadium, and the new interactive exhibit, Throw a Brick through Flanders's Front Window while He's at Work.

Homer, we're sure you know that Springfield was founded by and named for frontiersman Jebediah Obadiah Zachariah Jedediah Springfield, who famously said, "A noble spirit embiggens the smallest man." Can you tell us something else about the town's history?

History? Who do I look like to you, Doris Kearns Goodwin? No, seriously — sometimes I look in the mirror and I see her staring back at me.

Springfield is divided into many neighborhoods. There's Chinatown, Bum Town, Junkyville, Crackton, Greek Town, Press-board Estates, Tibet Town, and the South Street Squidport. Do you have a favorite?
My favorite is your home neighborhood: Stupid-Question Town.

Do you have a favorite family-getaway destination that's close to Springfield? An amusement park or a campground, perhaps?

Oh, I know a great place. It's called "hammock in the backyard with a six-pack of beer while the kids are inside playing Nintendo." For saying that, I'd like a free Nintendo.

We've heard that you've had some trou-

bles with various all-you-can-eat buffets. Are those issues now resolved?

Well, let's just say that the case of *Homer Simpson v. the Frying Dutchman Seafood Restaurant* is working its way up the appellate courts, and it will probably reach the Supreme Court. At that point, I think I'll have a good shot, because I once saw Clarence Thomas at a Hometown Buffet, and he

was loading his robes with garlic knots.

We've noticed that there are plenty of sports that Springfielders can enjoy. They can catch a game at Isotope Stadium, or they can get together at the Bowl-a-Rama or Sir Putts-a-Lot Merrie Olde Fun Center. Do you do much athletically, Homer?

Oh yes. I work out on the StairMaster five

times a week — not! Look at me, I'm a fat load! Enjoy your flight. I'm going to Moe's!

Homer, you're already at Moe's. Enjoy your beer. *AW*

www.americanwaymag.com

Washington, D.C.-based freelance writer **JOSEPH GUINTO** would like to buy author Gay Talese a Duff the next time he's at Moe's.

Five. Best. Springfield. Moments. Ever.

A lot of things can happen in a town that borders Maine, Ohio, Nevada, and Kentucky. Here are five of the more memorable events, some of which haven't even happened yet. Weird.

April 29, 1990 In a story ahead of its time, town TV clown Krusty gets arrested for robbing a convenience store. Although he was actually framed by his TV sidekick, Sideshow Bob, Krusty is convicted in the media and in popular opinion even before his trial. As Homer put it, "The clown is G-I-L-L-L-T-Y."

January 14, 1993 A huckster sells Springfield on a flawed monorail project. During its maiden journey, the monorail becomes a runaway, stopping only when conductor Homer Simpson hooks it to a giant faux donut. Homer's conclusion: "Donuts. Is there anything they can't do?"

May 21, 1995 After an oil reserve is discovered beneath Springfield Elementary, town billionaire Montgomery Burns builds a slanted drilling rig in order to drain the reserve without touching the school's property. Fumes from the rig pollute nearby Moe's Tavern, causing town drunkard Barney Gumble to declare, "These fumes aren't as fun as beer. Sure, I'm all dizzy and nauseous, but where's the inflated sense of self-esteem?"

May 20, 2007 *The Simpsons'* 400th episode airs. Special guest star: Ludacris. Not expected to appear: Oprah.

July 27, 2007 *The Simpsons Movie* premieres. To quote Monty Burns, "Excellent."

WHIMSY. THE WINK. THE PLUSH. THE WONDER. THE BEAUTY. THE DAY.
CALM. THE PLEASURE. THE BLISS. THE SILENCE. THE DEATH.
THE COMFORT. THE TENDerness. THE NIGHT. THE
THE HEAT. THE GLOW. THE PASSION.

ME

BY MELIÀ

CONTEMPORARY RESORTS AND URBAN HOTELS
CABO CANCUN MADRID
800.33MELIA MEBYMELIA.COM