

= The Way We Was =

" The Way We Was " is the twelfth episode of The Simpsons ' second season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 31 , 1991 . In the episode , Marge tells the story of how she and Homer first met and fell in love . Flashing back to 1974 , we see how Homer falls in love with Marge in high school and tries to get close to her by enlisting her as his French tutor . After several hours of verb conjugation , Marge falls for Homer too , only to become enraged when he admits that he is not a French student . Marge rejects Homer 's invitation to the prom and goes with Artie Ziff . Artie turns out to be a terrible date and Marge realizes that it is Homer she really wants .

The episode was written by Al Jean , Mike Reiss , and Sam Simon , and directed by David Silverman . It was the first flashback episode of The Simpsons . Jon Lovitz guest starred in it as Artie Ziff . The episode features cultural references to songs such as " The Joker " and " (They Long to Be) Close to You " , and the television series Siskel & Ebert & the Movies . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 15 @. @ 6 , and was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

When the Simpsons ' television breaks down , Marge tells her children how she and Homer first met . The year is 1974 and Homer and Marge are both in their senior year of high school . Unlike Homer , Marge is a responsible student , but after she burns a bra at a feminist rally , she is sent to detention . Homer is also sent to detention along with his best friend Barney for smoking in the restroom . When Homer sees Marge for the first time as she enters the detention room , he instantly falls in love . Despite his father Abraham 's warning that he is wasting his time , Homer is determined to win Marge 's heart .

To impress Marge , Homer joins the debate team , of which Marge is a member . At a debate , Homer finds out that Marge is more interested in the more articulate Artie Ziff . Therefore , Homer pretends to be a French student so that he can be tutored by Marge and when Homer asks Marge to the senior prom she accepts . However , when Homer confesses that he is not really a French student , Marge is furious at him for making her lose sleep for a debate tournament the next morning . She ultimately loses to Artie , who asks her to be his partner to the prom ; she agrees . Homer does not realize that Marge has changed her plans , and so he shows up at her house for prom night to pick her up . Moments later Artie shows up , causing confusion to Marge 's family , and a despondent Homer leaves . Undaunted , he decides to go to the prom alone .

At the prom , Artie and Marge are voted prom king and queen , and the two share the first dance . Meanwhile , Homer , heartbroken , leaves and cries in the hallway . After the prom , Artie tries to get romantic with Marge in the backseat of his car : after he pushes his luck too far , she slaps him and demands to be taken home . Meanwhile , Homer 's limousine time has run out , and without any money , he decides to walk home . Along the way Marge and Artie pass by Homer . After Artie drops Marge off at her house , she returns in her car to pick up Homer , realizing that he was the man for her all along . Homer manages to fix up the strap of Marge 's dress with the corsage that he got her after Artie ruined it from his earlier attempt .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Al Jean , Mike Reiss , and Sam Simon , and directed by David Silverman . Jon Lovitz guest starred as Artie . It was his first guest appearance on The Simpsons , but he has appeared many times since . Artie 's departing line to Marge after he drops her off was supposed to be " Good night . I 'm Artie Ziff ! " , but short on time , the editors shortened it to just " Good night ? " .

Characters making their first appearance on the show in this episode are Wiseguy , Artie , Rainier Wolfcastle (as the fictional action hero McBain) , Principal Dondelinger , and Marge 's father . Artie 's appearance and body language is based on a man Silverman went to high school with

named Mark Eisenberg . Silverman said that when he directed the episode , he went through his high school yearbook for character ideas and designs , because Silverman went to high school in the period that the episode is parodying . Wolfcastle 's voice and design was based on actor Arnold Schwarzenegger . The writers actually invented Wolfcastle for the episode " Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? " , before " The Way We Was " went into production , but since " The Way We Was " aired before it is still considered his first appearance . The character was originally named McBain , after the film franchise that he stars in . When the film McBain was released in 1991 , after the episode had aired , the films ' producers refused to allow the show to use the name in future episodes , so the name Rainier Wolfcastle , to represent the actor 's real name , was created to use instead . Later , the use of the name McBain returned to the show .

" The Way We Was " originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 31 , 1991 . The episode was , together with " Homer vs. Lisa and the 8th Commandment " , selected for release in a video collection titled The Best of The Simpsons , that was released May 26 , 1998 . The episode was also included on The Simpsons season two DVD set , which was released on August 6 , 2002 . Jean , Reiss , Silverman , Matt Groening , and James L. Brooks participated in the DVD 's audio commentary . An action figure set based on the episode was released by Winning Moves . It featured the characters Homer , Marge , Artie , Barney , Grampa , Patty , and Selma , all in their flashback designs . In April 2002 , as part of an EB Games exclusive , action figures of Marge and Homer in their prom outfits were released by Playmates Toys . An action figure of Artie was also released in June 2004 as part of the wave sixteen release of the World of Springfield series of action figures by Playmates Toys .

= = Cultural references = =

The television show that the Simpson family watches at the beginning of the episode , in which the two reviewers discuss the latest McBain film , is a parody of the American television series Siskel & Ebert & the Movies . In the flashback sequence , Homer is seen singing along to the 1973 song " The Joker " by the Steve Miller Band while driving to school . Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin posters hang on the wall of Homer 's 1974 bedroom . The 1970 song " (They Long to Be) Close to You " by The Carpenters is heard when Homer sees Marge for the first time . Homer eats a bucket of Shakespeare Fried Chicken when he reveals his feelings towards Marge to Grampa . At the debate , Homer disagrees about the idea of lowering the United States national speed limit to 55 mph (90 km / h) , arguing that " Sure , it 'll save a few lives , but millions will be late ! " This is a reference to the National Maximum Speed Law provision of the 1974 Emergency Highway Energy Conservation Act that prohibited speed limits higher than 55 mph . Barney asks a girl named Estelle if she wants to go to the prom with him , but she tells him that she would not go to the prom with him even if he were American actor Elliott Gould . Artie says he can think of a dozen highly cogent arguments to why Marge should accept his prom offer , one of which is from a Time magazine titled " America 's Love Affair with the Prom : Even wallflowers can look forward to one date a year , " a reference to the American magazine Time . Songs played in the episode include " The Streak " by Ray Stevens , " Goodbye Yellow Brick Road " by Elton John , " Colour My World " by Chicago , " Pick Up the Pieces " by Average White Band , and " The Hustle " by Van McCoy .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " The Way We Was " finished sixteenth in the ratings for the week of January 28 ? February 3 , 1991 , with a Nielsen rating of 15 @. @ 6 , equivalent to 14 @. @ 5 million viewing households . It was the highest @- @ rated show on the Fox network that week .

Since airing , the episode has received positive reviews from television critics . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , wrote : " A superb episode . Some colorful background for Homer and Marge (and a glimpse of Homer and Barney 's schooldays) plus our introduction to the world of the McBain films . Excellent . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson thought the episode was a " fine program " ,

and added that Lovitz made Artie " amusingly annoying " . Jacobson thought the episode captured the " tone of the mid @-@ Seventies with warmth and insight " , and the courtship " seemed charming but not sappy , and the show worked well overall . " Jacobson 's favorite line of the episode was Grampa 's advice to Homer about Marge , " Oh , son , don ? t overreach ! Go for the dented car , the dead @-@ end job , the less attractive girl ! " When Homer arrives at the Bouvier house to pick up Marge for the prom , Selma tells Patty " Marge 's dates get homelier all the time , " to which Patty replies " That 's what you get when you don 't put out . " Dawn Taylor of The DVD Journal thought these were the best lines of the episode . IGN ranked Lovitz as the eighth best guest star in the show 's history .

In his book Drawn to Television ? Prime @-@ time Animation from the Flintstones to Family Guy , Keith Booker wrote : " The episode details in a rather sentimental fashion the early struggles of the irresponsible Homer to support his new family [...] Such background episodes add an extra dimension to the portrayal of the animated Simpson family , making them seem oddly real and adding weight to their status as a family with a long history together . "