

= Ned Flanders =

Nedward " Ned " Flanders , Jr. is a recurring fictional character in the animated television series The Simpsons . He is voiced by Harry Shearer , and first appeared in the series premiere episode " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " . He is the good @-@ natured , cheery next @-@ door neighbor to the Simpson family and is generally loathed by Homer Simpson . A devout Evangelical Christian with an annoyingly perfect family , he is among the friendliest and most compassionate of Springfield 's citizens and is generally considered a pillar of the Springfield community .

He was one of the first characters outside of the immediate Simpson family to appear on the show , and has since been central to several episodes , the first being season two 's " Dead Putting Society " . His last name comes from Flanders St. in Portland , Oregon , the hometown of Simpsons creator Matt Groening . When he was created , he was intended to just be a neighbor who was very nice , but whom Homer loathed .

In May 2015 , Harry Shearer announced that he had quit the role and that the role would be recast . However , on July 7 , it was announced Fox signed all of its main cast members , including Shearer .

= = Role in The Simpsons = =

Ned is a genuinely well @-@ meaning good @-@ natured person and is one of the few in Springfield to whom that description applies . Firmly religious , he can be timid and something of a pushover . He is a Republican and a devout Evangelical Christian who strictly follows the Bible literally and is easily shocked when challenged on any point of dogma . This has led to his frequent calls to Reverend Lovejoy , who has become increasingly frustrated with and uninterested in Flanders .

Ned grew up in New York and was the son of " freaky beatniks " who did not discipline Ned and let him run wild . Eventually they took him to Dr. Foster , a psychiatrist , who put the young Ned through the University of Minnesota Spankalogical Protocol , which involved eight months of continuous spanking . The treatment worked so well that it rendered Flanders unable to express any anger at all and resulted in his trademark nonsensical jabbering at moments when he was particularly close to losing his temper , causing Ned to unknowingly repress his anger .

Ned got his diploma from Oral Roberts University in an unspecified field and worked as a salesman in the pharmaceuticals industry for the bulk of his adult life . Having saved much of his earnings , Flanders decided to quit his job and invested his family 's life savings into a store in the Springfield mall called " The Leftorium " specializing in products for left @-@ handed people . Despite a meek outward appearance , Ned hides an exceptionally well @-@ toned physique . In the episode " Hurricane Neddy " a flashback to 30 years earlier shows Ned as a young child despite the fact that he is later said to be 60 years old , attributing his youthful appearance to his conformity to the " three Cs " ? " clean living , chewing thoroughly , and a daily dose of vitamin church " .

Ned is very honest and sincere in carrying out the Christian doctrines of charity , kindness , and compassion . He is frequently shown doing volunteer work , and is rigorously honest and upright , even going so far as to spend an entire day tracking down a Leftorium customer in order to give him the extra change that he had forgotten to hand over . In " Homer 's Triple Bypass " , he donates a kidney and a lung out of the goodness of his heart to whoever needs them first . He also is a good neighbor to the Simpsons , regularly offering his assistance . Ned 's dogged friendship inspires the loyalty of others ; when his Leftorium appeared on the verge of bankruptcy shortly after it opened , Homer arranged a George Bailey @-@ esque bailout with the help of many people in Springfield .

Ned is a widower , having been married to the equally religious Maude . They had two children together ; the sheltered and naive Rod and Todd Flanders . In the eleventh season , Maude dies an untimely death in a freak accident involving a T @-@ shirt cannon (caused and aggravated by Homer) , leaving Flanders alone and grieving . While still married to Maude , Ned married Ginger , while on a drunken bender in Las Vegas . Ginger came to live with Ned and his sons for a brief period following Maude 's death in a later episode , but she quickly grew tired of the Flanders ' sickly

@-@ sweet personalities and fled . Despite his outward nerdishness , Flanders has also been connected romantically with a beautiful Christian @-@ rock singer , Rachel Jordan , movie star Sara Sloane and eventually marrying local teacher Edna Krabappel .

In the early years of The Simpsons , Homer Simpson generally loathed Ned , because Ned 's family , job , health and self @-@ discipline are of higher quality than he could ever hope to attain himself . Homer is often shown borrowing (or stealing) items from Flanders , such as a weather vane , a camcorder , a diploma , a toothbrush and an air conditioning unit . Even the Simpsons ' couch came from " the curb outside Flanders ' house " . Homer has since come to have a love @-@ hate relationship with Ned , sometimes being his best friend , partly due to Ned 's selfless tolerance of him , and other times treating Ned with complete disregard . Homer seems to genuinely care for Ned , despite still expressing and often acting on feelings of loathing . Nowadays Homer seems to regard Ned as more of a nuisance . An early running joke was that Marge considers Flanders to be a perfect neighbor and usually sides with him instead of her husband , which always enrages Homer . Flanders is normally oblivious to Homer 's disdain for him , although on occasions he has snapped at Homer after being pushed too far .

Flanders has been shown to call Reverend Lovejoy for advice often , even over minuscule things , to the point that Lovejoy has stopped caring and has even suggested that Flanders try a different religion . This was a running joke in the early seasons , but has been used less in the later episodes . In the eighth season , the episode " In Marge We Trust " would examine the relationship between Lovejoy and Flanders , and shows the history of their relationship and how Lovejoy became increasingly uninterested in Flanders ' problems . Flanders is shown to have a room in his house filled with memorabilia of The Beatles . He claims that this is because they were " bigger than Jesus " .

= = Character = =

= = = Creation = = =

Ned Flanders , who was designed by Rich Moore , first appeared in the season one episode " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " . The episode was the series premiere , but not the first episode produced . The first episode in which Flanders and his family were prominent is season two 's " Dead Putting Society " , which also contained the first appearance of Maude and Rod Flanders . Flanders was named after Flanders St. in Portland , Oregon , the hometown of Simpsons creator Matt Groening . Groening described the inspiration for Flanders as " just a guy who was truly nice , that Homer had no justifiable reason to loathe , but then did " . It was not until after the first few episodes that it was decided Flanders would be a faithful Christian . Mike Scully noted that Flanders is " everything Homer would love to be , although he 'll never admit it " . Flanders had been meant to be just a neighbor that Homer was jealous of , but Harry Shearer used " such a sweet voice " and Flanders was broadened to become a Christian and a sweet guy that someone would prefer to live next to over Homer . Flanders is known for his nonsensical jabbering . His first use of the word " diddly " was in " The Call of the Simpsons " .

= = = Development = = =

Ned Flanders was not religious in his first few appearances and in the first few seasons he was only mildly religious and his primary role was to be so " cloyingly perfect as to annoy and shame the Simpsons " , whereas Homer Simpson has always hated Ned Flanders and always tries to undermine him . There has been a consistent effort among the show 's writers to make him not just " goody good and an unsympathetic person " . In the later seasons , Flanders has become more of a caricature of the Christian right , and his role as an irritating " perfect neighbor " has been lessened . For example , some recent episodes Flanders has appeared to show rather prejudice attitudes against gays and people of religions other than Christianity .

Ned 's store " The Leftorium " first appeared in " When Flanders Failed " . It was suggested by George Meyer , who had had a friend who had owned a left @-@ handed specialty store which failed . The episode " Hurricane Neddy " shows Ned 's faith being tested and the writers also used the episode as a chance to examine what makes him tick .

There have been two occasions where Flanders was not voiced by Harry Shearer . In " Bart of Darkness " , Flanders 's high pitched scream was performed by Tress MacNeille and in " Homer to the Max " , Flanders comments about cartoons being easily able to change voice actors and on that occasion he was voiced by Karl Wiedergott .

= = = " The Adventures of Ned Flanders " = = =

The Adventures of Ned Flanders is a short film that appears at the end of the fourth season Simpsons episode " The Front " . The only one to ever exist and titled Love that God , it highlights Flanders ' dedication to religion and perfect family niceness by showing Ned nearly scolding Rod and Todd after they refuse to get ready for church ? only to have them inform him that it is , in fact , Saturday . Ned laughs at his mistake with a trademark " okely dokely do ! " The segment was added when " The Front " was too short and the producers had already tried " every trick in the book " to lengthen it . Although the episode was scripted by Adam I. Lapidus , " Love That God " was written by Mike Reiss , Al Jean and Sam Simon .

Generally , fans reacted with confusion as to why the short existed . Bill Oakley and several other writers loved the short so much that they wanted to do more , but time limitations prevented them . As a result , Oakley and Josh Weinstein decided to produce an entire episode that was nothing but loosely associated shorts , which became the season seven episode " 22 Short Films about Springfield " . The Flanders / Lovejoy segment of that episode was written by David X. Cohen . " 22 Short Films about Springfield " in turn inspired the Futurama episode " Three Hundred Big Boys " .

= = Reception = =

Although in more recent seasons Flanders has become a caricature of the Christian right , he is still a favorite of many Christian viewers . Dr. Rowan Williams , a former Archbishop of Canterbury , is a confessed Simpsons fan , and likes Flanders . Ned 's " unbearable piousness " has been described as " The Simpsons ' sharpest critique of organized religion . The show 's implicit argument seems to be that humorless obsessives like Ned have hijacked religious institutions , removing them from the center of society to a place where only those who know their brides of Beth Chedruharazzeb from their wells of Zohassadar can seek solace . " Steve Goddard of the website Ship of Fools said , " Ned is an innocent abroad in a world of cynicism and compromise . We love him because we know what it 's like to be classed as a nerd ? and to come out smiling at the end of it . "

= = Cultural influence = =

Ned Flanders has been described as " The United States ' most well @-@ known evangelical " . According to Christianity Today , " today on American college and high school campuses , the name most associated with the word Christian ? other than Jesus ? is not the Pope or Mother Teresa or even Billy Graham . Instead , it 's a goofy @-@ looking guy named Ned Flanders on the animated sitcom known as The Simpsons . The mustache , thick glasses , green sweater , and irrepressibly cheerful demeanor of Ned Flanders , Homer Simpson 's next @-@ door neighbor , have made him an indelible figure , the evangelical known most intimately to nonevangelicals . " Former Montreal Canadiens goaltender Peter Budaj had an image of Ned Flanders painted on the back of his helmet .

In 2001 and 2002 , the Greenbelt festival , a British Christian music and arts fest , held a special " Ned Flanders Night " . The 2001 event featured a look @-@ alike contest , as well as the tribute band " Ned Zeppelin " . It was held in a 500 @-@ seat venue that was filled to capacity , and an extra 1500 people were turned away at the door . A second event was held in 2002 , with Ned

Zeppelin reappearing .

Another tribute band , Okilly Dokilly , plays heavy metal music .

= = = Merchandise = = =

Flanders has been included in The Simpsons merchandise . In 2008 , the Flanders ' Book of Faith , part of the Simpsons Library of Wisdom was released by HarperCollins . The book takes a look at Flanders ' life and his ever enduring faith .