

= Santa 's Little Helper =

Santa 's Little Helper is a recurring character in the American animated television series The Simpsons . He is the pet greyhound of the Simpson family . The dog was introduced in the first episode of the show , the 1989 Christmas special " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " , in which his owner abandons him for finishing last in a greyhound race . Homer Simpson and his son Bart , who are at the race track in hope of winning some money for Christmas presents , see this and decide to adopt the dog .

Santa 's Little Helper has since appeared frequently on The Simpsons and the plots of many episodes center on him . During the course of the show , he has , for example , fathered litters of puppies , passed obedience school , had surgery for bloat , replaced Duffman as the mascot for Duff Beer , and been trained as a police dog at Springfield 's Animal Police Academy . Some of the episodes that focus on Santa 's Little Helper have been inspired by popular culture or real experiences that staff members of the show have gone through .

Although cartoon animals are often anthropomorphized , Santa 's Little Helper generally exhibits canine behavior . Cast member Dan Castellaneta currently provides the dog 's sounds on the show , although voice artist Frank Welker has also voiced him . Santa 's Little Helper has become a popular character following his appearances on The Simpsons . He ranked 27th in Animal Planet 's 2003 television special 50 Greatest TV Animals that was based on popularity , name recognition , and the longevity of the shows . He has also been featured in merchandise relating to The Simpsons , such as video games , board games , and comics .

= = Role in The Simpsons = =

Santa 's Little Helper is a greyhound that appears on the animated television series The Simpsons and is the pet dog of the Simpson family . He can often be seen on the show in minor appearances , although there have been some episodes that feature him heavily , including the first episode of The Simpsons . In that episode , " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " (season one , 1989) , Homer discovers that he has no money to buy Christmas presents for the family . Desperate for a miracle , he and Bart go to the greyhound racing track on Christmas Eve in hopes of earning some money . Although Homer has inside information on which dog is the most likely to win , he instead bets on a last @-@ minute entry , Santa 's Little Helper , believing the dog 's Christmas @-@ inspired name to be a sign . However , the greyhound finishes last . As Homer and Bart leave the track , they watch the dog 's owner abandon him for losing the race . Bart pleads with Homer to keep the dog as a pet and he agrees after it affectionately licks him on the cheek . When Bart and Homer return home , Santa 's Little Helper is assumed by the rest of the family to be a Christmas present .

In various episodes , Santa 's Little Helper can be seen chewing on newspapers and other objects in the Simpsons ' household , destroying furniture , and digging holes in the backyard . In " Bart 's Dog Gets an F " (season two , 1991) , he manages to infuriate the entire family by destroying valued items in the home . As a result , Homer and Marge want to get rid of the dog , but Bart and Lisa convince them that he can be trained at an obedience school . Santa 's Little Helper does not do well there as Bart is unwilling to use a choke chain suggested by the instructor . The night before the final exam , Bart and Santa 's Little Helper play , thinking it will be their last few hours together . This bonding breaks down the communication barrier , allowing the dog to understand Bart 's commands , and consequently pass the obedience school .

Santa 's Little Helper has fathered several puppies . In " Two Dozen and One Greyhounds " (season six , 1995) , he runs away to the dog racing track where he mates with a female greyhound named She 's the Fastest . She later gives birth to 25 puppies and when the Simpsons cannot take care of them any longer , they decide to sell them ; however , Mr. Burns steals the puppies and decides to make a tuxedo out of them . Before he does this , however , he becomes emotionally touched by them . This convinces him to never wear fur again and instead raise the puppies to be world @-@ class racing dogs . Santa 's Little Helper sires another litter of puppies with Dr. Hibbert 's poodle in the episode " Today I Am a Clown " (season 15 , 2003) . These puppies are given away

to townspeople .

The dog has been neglected or treated unfavorably by the family in some episodes . In " Dog of Death " (season three , 1992) , he nearly dies of bloat and they decide to make budget cuts in order to pay for the required operation . Although the dog 's life is saved , the family begins to feel the strain of their sacrifices and starts treating him badly , causing him to run away . He ends up in the possession of Mr. Burns , who trains him to become a vicious attack dog . Several days later , Bart stumbles upon the trained Santa 's Little Helper and is attacked , but the greyhound eventually recognizes his old friend and stops . In " The Canine Mutiny " (season eight , 1997) , Bart uses a fake charge card to buy a well @-@ trained rough collie named Laddie from a mail @-@ order catalog . Laddie learns many tricks that Santa 's Little Helper is completely unable to perform , and the Simpson family nearly forgets about their old pet . Bart eventually gives Santa 's Little Helper away instead of Laddie when repo men take back everything he fraudulently purchased . Feeling guilty about this disloyalty and bored with his too perfect new dog , Bart tries to get him back . When he finally finds him , Santa 's Little Helper is serving as a seeing @-@ eye dog for a blind man , but eventually decides to return to the family .

In " Stop or My Dog Will Shoot " (season 18 , 2007) , Santa 's Little Helper becomes a local hero after finding a lost Homer , and the Simpsons decide to enroll him in the Animal Police Academy . However , his new crime @-@ fighting job makes him jaded and one day at home he bites Bart. The Simpsons must therefore send the dog away to live with officer Lou . However , he gets to return after saving Bart from a toxic smoke cloud at school and then leaving the police force . In " How Munched is That Birdie in the Window ? " (season 22 , 2010) , after Santa 's Little Helper devours a pigeon with a broken leg that Bart was nursing , Bart gets mad at the dog and is unable to forgive him . The Simpsons therefore give him away to an ostrich farm . There , Bart says goodbye to him and explains that he should never , ever devour a bird . Bart then gets into a fight with an angry ostrich . After remembering that he was told that it 's wrong to kill birds , he ceases to aid Bart in the fight , confused at his own loyalty (for Bart 's sake or his orders) leaving Bart to strangle the ostrich to death . Bart then realizes that he could not help killing the pigeon and apologizes . Afterwards , the family goes back home with the dog .

The dog once replaced Duffman as the mascot for Duff Beer in the episode " Old Yeller Belly " (season 14 , 2003) , after he was seen drinking from a can of beer by balancing it on his nose . He becomes known as Suds McDuff and boosts sales of Duff Beer , making the family 's fortunes explode . However , this prompts his original sleazy owner and racing trainer to visit the Simpsons and prove that he 's the owner of the dog . The family later figures that if they can get Duffman to replace Suds as the Duff mascot , they can get their dog back . They plan to turn Duffman into a hero at a Duff Beer @-@ sponsored beach volleyball event ; however , their plan fails and a drunk shark that 's discovered at the event becomes the new mascot instead . Santa 's Little Helper gladly returns to the Simpson family .

= = Creation and development = =

Santa 's Little Helper 's initial appearance on The Simpsons was in the first episode of the series , " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " , which aired on Dec. 17 , 1989 . Since then , he has become a recurring character . The Simpsons creator Matt Groening told TV Guide in 2000 that " we [the staff] painted ourselves into a corner with our Christmas episode . Once we wrote the dog into the show , we were stuck with him . " The name " Santa 's Little Helper " was chosen because , according to writer Al Jean in the same TV Guide article , " we needed a name that would inspire Homer to bet on him , an omen , a Christmas name since he was betting on Christmas Eve . But , at that point , nobody was thinking long @-@ term . We weren 't considering what might happen in ten years , when we 've got to use this name . " Although " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " was the first episode of the series to air on TV , it was the eighth episode produced by the staff . It was chosen to air first because there were animation problems with the others . Jean told the Houston Chronicle in 2001 that after the first episode was broadcast and " the next seven didn 't have the dog , people wondered why . " He also said in 2003 that the staff enjoyed the first episodes that centered

on him , particularly " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " , which is the reason that more episodes about him were written .

Writer John Swartzwelder has noted that the staff members of the show write the character Homer in the same way that they write Santa 's Little Helper : " Both are loyal . Both have the same emotional range . And both will growl and possibly snap if you try to take their food . " Although animals in cartoons often behave with " semi @-@ human awareness " , Groening said on the DVD audio commentary for the episode " Two Dozen and One Greyhounds " that he prefers animals in cartoons to behave exactly the way they do in real life . As a result , Santa 's Little Helper is depicted in this way on the show . There have , however , been some exceptions for gags , but most of the time the staff of The Simpsons tries to keep animals acting realistically . Several journalists have commented on the greyhound 's lack of intelligence . In an article that compared The Simpsons to the animated series Family Guy , Todd Camp of the Fort Worth Star @-@ Telegram noted that " though Santa 's Little Helper may be the only Simpson who 's dumber than Homer , the Griffins ' pooch [Brian Griffin] is the brainiest member of the household " . In 1991 , Copley News Service 's Alison Ashton described Santa 's Little Helper as a " sweet and stupid dog " . Tom Coombe of The Morning Call wrote in 2002 that " fans of The Simpsons will tell you that the cartoon family 's dog [...] is often dumb , disobedient and skittish . Fans of the real @-@ life breed will paint a different picture ? of dogs that are peaceful , affectionate , [and] not given to drooling , panting " .

Some ideas for episodes featuring Santa 's Little Helper come from reality . The plot of " Dog of Death " was based on Swartzwelder 's experiences with his own dog , which had also suffered from bloat . However , unlike the events in the episode , Swartzwelder 's dog did not receive treatment as the operation was too expensive and the dog was too old . The Gold Coast Bulletin 's Ryan Ellem commented in 2005 that the Simpson family 's dilemma with the cost of the veterinary procedure is a realistic dilemma faced by many families who own dogs . Other episode ideas come from popular culture . For example , Santa 's Little Helper fathering 25 puppies in " Two Dozen and One Greyhounds " is a parody of the Disney film One Hundred and One Dalmatians , and Mr. Burns ' technique of brainwashing him into an attack dog in " Dog of Death " parodies A Clockwork Orange . Susan McHugh , who teaches theories of animals , literature , and culture at the University of New England , wrote in her 2004 book Dog that , " remaining loyal to his unlikely saviours , the boy Bart and his father Homer , this greyhound has prompted satires of contemporary dog culture , from Barbara Woodhouse 's authoritarian training methods [in " Bart 's Dog Gets an F "] to Lassie 's flawless service to the status quo [in " The Canine Mutiny "] . "

= = = Sounds = = =

Although cast member Dan Castellaneta occasionally voiced Santa 's Little Helper for bit parts , American voice artist Frank Welker most often provided the sounds of the dog and other animals on the show from " Bart 's Dog Gets an F " , which aired on March 7 , 1991 , to " Home Sweet Homediddly @-@ Dum @-@ Doodily " , which aired on October 1 , 1995 . He said on his official website in 2007 that he liked portraying Santa 's Little Helper because the dog was a " sympathetic " character . Welker has been praised by staff members for his performances on the show . David Mirkin has noted that " he can do anything , and it fits perfectly . You forget you 're listening to a guy , and he 's a pleasure to work with . " Groening has commented that he was " unbelievably good " at doing animal noises . After 1995 , Castellaneta voiced Santa 's Little Helper on his own while Welker performed other animal noises until his full departure in 2002 , when he was denied a pay raise . In the " questions and answers " section on his website , Welker revealed that the reason he stopped performing as Santa 's Little Helper was because " The producers thought ... ' Hmmm , Dan barks pretty good , and we are already paying him and he seems to like doing the dog thing ... why do we need to pay Welker who comes in here , spends less than an hour , eats all the doughnuts , refuses to come to rehearsals ... let 's just give the damn dog to Dan ! ' " .

= = Reception = =

Santa 's Little Helper has become a well @-@ known dog because of his appearances in the series . A writer for The Grand Rapids Press wrote in 2002 that " we all know who Homer , Marge , Bart , Lisa and Maggie are ? heck , most Americans probably recognize their pets , Santa 's Little Helper and Snowball II " . McHugh wrote in Dog that while Master McGrath was the most famous greyhound of the 19th century , " the most popular greyhound a hundred years later " is Santa 's Little Helper . In the television special 50 Greatest TV Animals that was hosted by Mario Lopez and aired on Animal Planet in 2003 , the dog ranked 27th . Other dogs featured on the list were Lassie (first) , Eddie (fifth) , Snoopy (sixth) , Scooby @-@ Doo (13th) , Rin Tin Tin (14th) , Max (20th) , Triumph , the Insult Comic Dog (24th) , Buck (29th) , Chipper (44th) , and Tiger (50th) . According to a writer for McClatchy News Service , the rankings were " determined by popularity , name recognition and how long the show lasted . "

Among fans and critics , Santa 's Little Helper has been mostly well received . He ranked seventh in a 2008 poll by Dog Whisperer 's Cesar Millan that determined the " best @-@ loved television dog of all time . " Lassie ranked first in the poll . In addition , he was voted the tenth favorite Simpsons character by readers of Simpsons Comics in the United Kingdom in 2010 . In a list of their top twelve favorite dogs from cartoons , comics , and animation , writers for The Tampa Tribune listed Santa 's Little Helper at number six , writing : " We admire his upbeat nature even after having his legs broken by Mr. Burns and being abandoned by Bart for another dog , Laddie . " He also ranked 75th on Retrocrush author Robert Berry 's list of " The 100 Greatest Dogs of Pop Culture History " in 2006 . The character has attracted some criticism too , though . While reviewing the episode " Bart 's Dog Gets an F " in 2010 , Nathan Rabin of The A.V. Club wrote :

" As cartoon dogs go , Santa ? s Little Helper is spectacularly unspectacular . In a realm of aggressively anthropomorphic canines , some of whom , admittedly , have strong speech impediments , he doesn ? t talk or wisecrack or engage in shenanigans . His abilities and powers begin and end with masticating , defecating , and regular napping . You know , just like a real dog . Consequently , episodes devoted to Santa ? s Little Helper tend to be a little on the sleepy side , even the Simpsons Christmas special that launched the series . "

= = Influence = =

Since his first appearance on The Simpsons , Santa 's Little Helper has appeared in merchandise relating to the show . On the board art of The Simpsons Clue , a 2000 board game by USAopoly based on Clue , he is shown drinking Duff Beer that has been spilled on the floor . In another board game published by USAopoly called The Simpsons Monopoly , based on Monopoly and released in 2001 , the dog is featured as one of the six pewter playing pieces . Santa 's Little Helper has also appeared in issues of Simpsons Comics , in the 2007 film The Simpsons Movie , and in video games based on The Simpsons such as Night of the Living Treehouse of Horror and The Simpsons Game . In addition , the dog has been made into action figures by McFarlane Toys , action figures by Playmates Toys in the World of Springfield series , and plush toys .

Santa 's Little Helper has made an impact on real life in that an espresso @-@ based drink has been named after him at the award @-@ winning restaurant and bar Bambara in Salt Lake City 's Hotel Monaco . Bartender Ethan Moore told The Salt Lake Tribune in 2004 that it is " one of the most popular holiday drinks " at Bambara . In addition , a dog walking and pet sitting company in New York City , called " Santa 's Little Helper Dog Walking and Pet Sitting " , has been named after him . The greyhound has also appeared by himself on the cover of the October 16 , 2000 issue of TV Guide . This issue was released with 24 different covers , all featuring different characters from The Simpsons .