

Some streetwise TV Extras

THE LATEST batch of letters from readers has brought in an inspired new crop of Extras — my term for those in-jokes buried within TV shows. The most inspired Extra, though, came not in the mail but from a recent conversation with a show creator himself, "Simpsons" mastermind Matt Groening.

■ When I asked Groening to identify one of the most obscure Extras he has included in his joke-filled Fox series, he chuckled and revealed, "Many characters are named after streets in my hometown of Portland, Ore."

In fact, he went on, the streets he used are all from the northwest section of town, with names that include (neighbor Ned) Flanders, (Rev.) Lovejoy and (Mayor) Quimby.

"I wanted people to be driving down 23d St. in Portland and keep passing these signs, and think they're going crazy," Groening said with a laugh Bart would be proud of.

■ Bob Lasprogato of Westport, Conn., caught an eager-beaver "Law & Order" Extra from a recent episode.

"Barbara Billingsley played a defense attorney who alluded to her client as a 'June Cleaver' type," he wrote. "Funny, since Billingsley portrayed June Cleaver on 'Leave It to Beaver.'"

Yes, but was the killer that week an Eddie Haskell type?

■ Another "Law & Order" Extra, from the season finale, was sniffed out by John McCarthy of the Bronx, who listened closely when a crime-scene witness claimed that several cab drivers had seen the same shooting.

"They were from the Sunshine Cab Company," McCarthy wrote. "The Sunshine Cab Company was the one from 'Taxi.'"

That was a very fare observation, John.

■ "Here's an Extra," wrote Paul McGuire of the Bronx. "I bet I'm the only one who found it. On the May 7 episode of

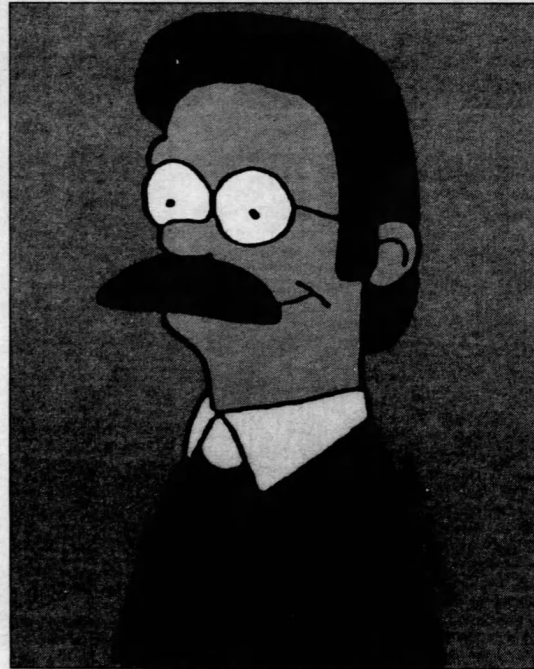
'Men Behaving Badly' (hey, someone's got to watch it), Rob Schneider was shown lying in bed. Above the bed was a pennant for a football team: the Minnesota State Screaming Eagles, the fictional team on the show 'Coach.'"

Paul, you win your bet.

■ Bruce Wernau of Monsey, N.Y., caught an Extra from "Homicide: Life on the Street" involving occasional guest star Harlee McBride. Usually seen as a TV reporter, in this episode McBride played an assistant coroner, chatting about her new boyfriend — a standup comic.

"McBride happens to be married to Richard Belzer (Detective Munch), also a standup," noted Wernau.

That's a standup Extra,



ORE. LORE: "Simpsons" Ned Flanders the man, the avenue

Bruce. Thanks.

■ Finally, from Fox' "Ned and Stacey," which wasn't renewed for fall:

"On 'Ned and Stacey,' Thomas Haden Church (formerly of 'Wings') was asked for his political affiliation," wrote Sidney Bossuk of Little Ferry, N.J.

Asked if he was left-wing or right-wing, Church responded by reverting to his goofy "Wings" character.

"In his best 'Lowell' voice

and winking slightly at the camera," Sidney detailed, "he said, 'I guess I'm 'Wingless.'"

After last month's finale, so are we all. Not that I'm complaining.

Have your own Extras? Send them to:

Extras
David Bianculli
New York Daily News
450 W. 33d St., 3d Floor
New York, NY 10001



**DAVID
BIANCULLI**