



HISTORY

# Her Bronx tale

COURTESY MARCUS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF ATLANTA

Story by **ANDY JOHNSTON**

In her latest book, “Just Kids from the Bronx: Telling It the Way It Was: An Oral History,” Arlene Alda shares 64 stories on life growing up in the Bronx through the eyes of borough natives who rose to positions of prestige and fame.

She also tells her own story.

Alda grew curious about Bronx tales five or six years ago after learning that she and J. Crew CEO Mickey

Drexler grew up in the same building.

It’s the 19th book for Alda, a New York Times best-selling author who has been married to actor Alan Alda since 1957.

Both she and her husband will be at the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta’s book festival on Nov. 15.

**Living Northside: How did you come up with a list of people to profile?**

**Alda:** It started out in a very random fashion. We know a few people who

*“I didn’t know what I was aiming for in the beginning. I just knew that there was something wonderful here.”*

ARLENE ALDA

are well known, who grew up in the Bronx: Regis Philbin, Al Pacino, Mary Higgins Clark. It was kind of like a jigsaw puzzle in a way. I had end pieces, but I didn’t have what the picture was. So then I started networking. I started accessing lists on the Internet and everyone knows someone else who knows someone else who would turn out to be invaluable for the story and the book. That’s how it grew.

**How long did it take you to write the book?**

It was a four-year project. I started and stopped for a couple of months and let the material sit because I didn’t know exactly what form it would take. I didn’t know what I was aiming for in the beginning. I just knew that there was something wonderful here with the stories that were told to me. ... When I put it aside, did other things and came back to it, it reconfirmed my gut feeling that this had to be a big project and it had to span decades.

**Would you take on this type of project again?**

It’s a big challenge. I can’t think of how [or] what I might dig in again of this nature, because the Bronx is really and clearly dear to my heart. I don’t like sequels. I don’t like to duplicate or replicate, so I wouldn’t do this again. And I’m not sure exactly what I’m going to do next. I have to let this kind of sit for a while.

*Arlene and Alan Alda discuss “Just Kids from the Bronx.” at the annual Edition of the Book Festival at the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. 7:30 p.m., Nov. 15. ■*