



Barbara Dana

Biography

Ada Purdy in **“RAISING FLAGG”**

Barbara Dana co-stars with her former husband, Alan Arkin, as Flagg and Ada Purdy, the seemingly-mismatched couple they had first portrayed 20 years before for filmmaker Neal Miller in the critically-acclaimed “A Matter of Principle” on PBS – American

Playhouse.

Even though Dana and Arkin had been divorced only months before filming began on “Raising Flagg,” she says it was never an issue. “When Neal asked if we’d do more with these characters, we said yes immediately – then time went by,” Dana recalls. “Finally the film came to pass, and Alan and I weren’t together anymore. But for my part I never considered not playing Ada again.”

“Raising Flagg” also reunites Dana with Austin Pendleton, a friend for over 30 years who plays Flagg’s childhood friend, Gus.

A well-known children’s book author as well as an actress, Dana literally grew up in show business as the daughter of a writer on such classic radio shows as “The Hit Parade” and “The Shadow.” She attended Quintano’s School for Young Professionals in New York, where her classmates included Tuesday Weld, Sandra Dee and Patty Duke.

By the time she was 17, Dana had made her New York stage debut in the off-Broadway production of Arthur Laurents’ “A Clearing in the Woods.” At 22, she was cast in the role of “Honey” in the Broadway production of “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolf?” – for which she spent a year on the road with the national company. It was during that tour that Arkin encouraged Dana to write – which resulted in a collection of short stories called “Spencer and Friends,” published in 1966.

Dana and Arkin originally met onstage at the Henry Miller Theater in New York City on her third call-back audition for the play, “Enter Laughing.” He had been cast in the lead and she was reading for his girlfriend. By sheer coincidence, she had been watching TV the night before when she spotted the young unknown actor, then with Second City, in a television drama. “I just thought he was one of the best actors I’d ever seen. And the next day I go to the theater and there he was. It was literally the next day,” she remembers. Dana not only got the part, they married a year later, in 1964.

Over the years they have appeared in at least a half dozen films together – including “The In-Laws,” “Popi,” and the television movies, “The Fourth Wise Man,” “The Other Side of Hell,” and “Necessary Parties” for PBS, based on a screen adaptation of her book that they had penned together.

Arkin also directed her in the off-Broadway production of Maxwell Anderson’s “Joan of Lorraine,” in which she played Joan of Arc. The historical character would later become the subject of her novel for young adults, *Young Joan*. “While Alan was doing various films in Europe, I spent time in Joan’s house and garden and followed the trail of her activities as preparation for playing the part, then I went back again when I wrote the book. As I was doing that, I felt I had to write about her. I didn’t want to let her go,” Dana says.

“Raising Flagg” marks Dana’s return to acting since 1988, when she decided to concentrate on writing full-time. In the intervening years, she has penned seven award-winning books for children and young adults – including *Crazy Eights*, *Necessary Parties*, *Zucchini*, *Zucchini Out West*, and *Rutgers and the Water-Snouts*, all published by HarperCollins. Her next novel is based on the life of Emily Dickinson, and she is working on the musical stage version of the young adult classic, *Julie of the Wolves*, by Jean Craighead George. “As long as I can remember, I loved to write,” she says. “Before I could write things down, I remember making up stories that my mother would write down for me.”