

Mo Rocca and Linda Greenhouse Speak to a Capacity Crowd for Nineteenth Annual Brendan Gill Lecture

CBS Correspondent Mo Rocca and Pulitzer Prize-Winning Supreme Court Expert Linda Greenhouse spoke to a capacity crowd on Friday night, in conversation on the Supreme Court, past and present. Bronxville Historical Conservancy (BHC) Board co-chair Erin Saluti welcomed the audience and introduced BHC co-founder Marilynn Hill, who introduced the speakers. Rocca's clever, quick wit found an equally engaging partner in Greenhouse. Their conversation mixed humor with an impressive command of history, the law, and the Supreme Court.

Greenhouse turned the tables on interviewer Rocca by asking him the first question of the night. Referring to Rocca's book, *All the Presidents' Pets: The Story of One Reporter Who Refused to Roll Over*, she inquired "Mo, what pet would you suggest for our current president?" Rocca pondered a few suggestions before determining "some people should not have pets," drawing laughter from the audience. Rocca asked Greenhouse about a dinner they attended prior to the evening's program. Greenhouse quickly confided, she had both fallen in love and was disillusioned at the dinner. "I met Bronxville's Mayor tonight. I love Mary Marvin," she proclaimed, to audience applause. "We learned at dinner we share a connection to Nelson Rockefeller." She informed Rocca and the audience that Marvin had worked as an assistant to Rockefeller at the time Greenhouse covered him as a journalist. Recalling a meeting with Rockefeller at his Pocantico Hills home, Greenhouse told Marvin how impressed and flattered she had been when Rockefeller greeted her at the door, mentioning specific details of their first meeting in Brooklyn. "That is until Mayor Marvin reminded me at dinner tonight, Rockefeller had aides preparing him for meetings like mine, and Mayor Marvin was the aide who had prepped him about me."

The evening's conversation continued, covering not only court decisions, but also the personalities on the bench. From Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman appointed to the Court, to the recent appointment of Neil Gorsuch, Rocca wondered how much personality played a role in Court decisions. He admitted he and Neil Gorsuch shared mutual friends: "These are people who went to high school with him, served on student council with him, and all say he is thoughtful, nice, smart, and has visited kindnesses on people." He then asked Greenhouse, "Does that matter?" Greenhouse allowed personality does play a role, but that each justice must follow the law to make a persuasive argument. She lamented the most recent confirmation process puts Gorsuch in a tough position. Pointing to politicians using the Supreme Court appointment as a prize for winning the election, she said the confirmation process today is broken.

Their discussion also included the debate about term limits for justices as opposed to the current constitutionally protected life term. Not fixed in her own mind on the topic, Greenhouse is interested in the debate around this subject. Rocca inquired as to each Justice's path to a seat on the Supreme Court, and Greenhouse acknowledged both ambition and serendipity factor into appointments to the bench. From which Justice asked the fewest questions to which Judge received the most laughs, Greenhouse, over the course of their conversation, revealed the depth and breadth of knowledge that has fueled her Pulitzer Prize-winning journalism and scholarship.

The speakers allowed time for questions before joining the audience for a champagne reception. The program and reception was the Nineteenth Annual Brendan Gill Lecture sponsored by the Bronxville Historical Conservancy and presented each year as a gift to the community. This year, the event was held at Concordia College's Sommer Center. The program was recorded and can be viewed on channel 74 on the Village Cable station.