



# Spinoff

ROTARY CLUB OF WEST OTTAWA

Marcia Armstrong, President

November 7, 2023 Reporter: Don Butler

Program: Act of Remembrance. Betsy Rigel on “The Poppy Lady”

This meeting was hybrid

**Meeting Video:** : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK50KKVOzOA>

## Meeting enablers

Communication links: **Brett Brooking** , Payments: **Dave Morton**;

Greeter: **Lynne Fraser** Banner setup: **Jen Broad** and others

Past President's Draw: - **Jean Begin** for **Johnny Marquez**

**President Marcia Armstrong** welcomed us to the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Rotary Year. She thanked the meeting enablers and reminded us we meet on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg people.

**Guests:** former member Linas Pilypaitis Lt .Cdr Ret'd` , RCN who would help with Act of Remembrance, Nancy Gilbert (guest of Gaye Moffett), Robin Oliverio (guest of Emilie Gendron,) our speaker Betsy Rigel and her son be(on line), Jean Francois Pinsonnault who spoke to us a few weeks ago

## Remembrance

**President Marcia** “we come together to remember the sacrifice of others and what we owe them. We also recommit ourselves as peace makers in our service to others.”

Video- a bagpiper playing the Lament. Linas recited *In Flanders Fields*

Video- Bugle -*The Last Post*

Two minute silence

Video Bugle *The Rouse* .

Video a fanfare while flashing flags of countries where Charles is king

Video a choral rendition of *God Save the King* with pictures of the King at royal events and other scenes associated with the Commonwealth history.

Linas recited *For the Fallen*.

Video: pictures of several Canadian military bands while a band rendition of O Canada played

**President Marcia** invited us to be present for the laying of a wreath at the Nepean Cenotaph on Centrepointe Drive on November 11.

### **Presentation**

**Gaye Moffett** told us our speaker, Betsy Rigel, had grown up in Ottawa and gotten degrees from McGill and Columbia. She had lived in in the UK and Edmonton and was now back in Ottawa. She had worked for Urbandale and served on the boards of Ronald McDonald house and her synagogue. She would tell us about her grandmother, Lillian Freiman, the Poppy Lady.

Betsy took the mic, thanked **Gaye** for the invitation and her son Bruce for doing the slides for her presentation. She then quoted Proverbs “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all” as being particularly apt for her grandmother for her willingness to help any who needed it.

Lillian had been born in 1885, the fifth of eleven children, to a religious couple who had many philanthropic undertakings. She married AJ Freiman in 1903. With the outbreak of war in 1914 Lillian established a group in her house to sew warm dressing gowns for soldiers recuperating from their wounds. On weekends she would invite Ottawa-based Jewish soldiers and their non-Jewish friends to her home for recreational activities. These made her aware of the problems faced by families of soldiers serving overseas and in 1918 her women’s group sent Christmas gifts to 9000 children of soldiers. Lillian felt more had to be done for veterans and arranged for veteran organization representatives to meet at her house to discuss the formation of a nationwide organization for Canadian veterans. This became the Royal Canadian Legion.

Funding was required to deal with many issues affecting veterans and this led to the birth of the poppy campaign. American and French organizations, inspired by McCrae’s poem In Flanders Fields, in 1919 recognized the poppy as the symbol of remembrance and sales of French-made artificial poppies were helping support families of war casualties. In 1921 veterans’ organizations in Canada and Britain also recognized the poppy as the remembrance symbol. Lillian saw the poppy sales as a major fundraiser and the first Canadian poppies were made by disabled veterans in Lillian’s home. The first Poppy Day was November 11 1921. Lillian focused on poppy promotion. After the 1929 economic crash shelters were set up for unemployed and homeless veterans. Poppy sales helped feed those in shelters and provide medical care.

In 1917 Lillian was asked to run Ottawa's response to the influenza pandemic. She organized treatment and provided information on preventing its spread, She had important roles in organizations for Polish and Armenian relief, the Girl Guides, the CNIB, and the Perley Home. She also helped individuals and there is a dramatic tale of a late night train trip to Quebec city to prevent the extradition of three German deserters to Germany where they would face execution for desertion. She supported projects in what is now Israel. Despite then Canadian strictures on Jewish immigration she helped arrange for Canada to accept over 100 Ukrainian Jewish orphans. In 1934 Lillian was awarded the OBE, the first Jew in Canada to be so honoured.

Lillian died in 1940 and mourners included Prime Minister McKenzie King and representatives of all the organizations she had helped. Photos show a large crowd including many veterans wearing medals on the road outside the synagogue.

#### Q&A

**Denzil Feinberg** offered to arrange with retired officer he knows for a guided tour of what had been Lillian's house and is now the Army Officers' Mess on Somerset Street.

Answering **Doug Heyland** and **Don Butler**, Betsy has provided her script which will accompany this Spinoff. Betsy added that some of her slides had been provided by Lt Col Ret'd Dan Mackay who also leads tours of the Mess. (Ed note: Col Mackay spoke to our Club in 2016 covering different aspects of the Lillian Freiman story)

**Ginette Thomas** " Wonderful presentation on a wonderful woman"

**President Marcia** What would she have achieved had she not died so early?

**Gaye Moffett** thanked Betsy telling her about our donation to Polio Plus to mark her presentation

**Past Presidents Draw.** Linas Pilypaitis drew a ticket and **Mike Traub** got the \$25.

**Soc and Rec. Ron Doll** said the next event would be Rotary Day at the Races on Nov 23 at 3pm. Post time 4 pm. See **Lynne's** email Nov 5.

**President Marica:** Gerhard Peters will be back with Christmas cakes for sale at the Nov 14 meeting.

**Mary Wattie** still needs volunteers to present Dictionary4 Life. See her email Nov 2.

### **Happy Dollars**

**Larry Chop:** at a D4L presentation one grade 3 recipient was excited to find ‘constipation’.

**Anup Subedi:** is 46 today and donated appropriately.

**Gaye Moffett:** told how checking the timing of her \$2 to the meter against the time her parking ticket was issued got it voided.

**Mike Traub** donated his PP Draw winnings.

**Keith Henry** funeral: see **President Marcia** email (dated November 12)

**To end this Remembrance meeting President Marcia** told of and showed pictures from her visit in 2013 with her son to some of the battlefields and war cemeteries in Normandy. She found the trip very moving.

### **We end**

With a few words on the next meeting, **President Marcia** adjourned the meeting.

### **Cash Calendar winners**

<https://www.ottawarotarycalendar.com/2023-winners.html>

### **Next Meeting**

#### **Hybrid**

**Tuesday, November 14 , 2023**

“Doors open” 12:00. Meeting proper starts @ 12:30

Diana Pepall: The Examination Unit- Canada’s Bletchley Park 1941-1945

Intro & Thanks: **Lynne Fraser**

Spinoff: **Don Butler**

Duties per roster

Greeters: **Melvin Lee, Lynne Fraser**

Banner setup: **John Matthews, Frank Cranton.**

Past President's Draw: - **John Matthews,**

**In person: St Anthony Banquet Hall**

**Zoom at** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81365346181> Meeting ID: 813 6534 6181