

**IRENE KALLIGA
1912 – 2000**

FOUNDER OF THE GREEK GUIDING ASSOCIATION

Irene Kalliga, daughter of Antony Benakis, was born in Athens, Greece. She acquired at home education by Alexandros Delmouzos. In 1930 she married Pavlos Kalligas and got a daughter, Aimilia.

She was distinguished for her appreciable and multifaceted social services and her benevolence to our society.

In 1932, in the age of 20, she, with a group of young women, founded the first unit of Greek Guiding Association. It was the first time that the chance was given to girls and young women to familiarize with the values and principles of Guiding and to take action for their self-development, making use of their fullest potential, growing into active citizens of our country. From then Guide Units pop up one after the other and membership grew tremendously in no time. Irene Kalliga from the very first days of the Association offered her services. She served as Chief Commissioner, Chair of the National Board, Chair of the Local Board of the City of Athens, etc.

In 1939 she dynamically stood against government commands to incorporate the Guides with the Political Youth Party. Thus, the National Board took the decision to suspend all Guide activities and operations.

After liberation, in 1945, the Greek Guiding Association was re-established and Irene Kalliga became once again an active member of the National Board. During her term many remarkable things took place for the development and advancement of the Association, in which she played a key role. Handbooks for all Branches, toolkits for Commissioners, and Leader Magazines were published. In 1958 a big camp for Guides was organized and in 1960 Athens hosted the 17th WAGGS World Conference. Moreover, "Urban Guide Units" were established in the underdevelopment suburbs of Athens, missions to support earthquake victims in the Ionian Islands and in Volos were organized and the real estate of the Association grew remarkably. It was at that period that our Training Centre in Vari, National Camp sites all over the country and the Headquarters in the centre of Athens were bought. Also, in the memory of Antony Benakis, Irene Tsimpouki and other eminent benefactors of the Association, the National Board issued corresponding medal awards.

Today, the Greek Guiding Association honouring her memory has established the *Irene Kalliga Award* and has named the Assembly Room at the Headquarters after her.

However, Irene Kalliga did not only serve the Association per se, she made the Guide Law and Promise a way of living. During WWII she was a volunteer ambulance driver and a Red Cross nurse who served in several hospitals. In 1941 she allocated her house in Athens to become the Office for Warriors and War victims.

She was also a member of Occupational Resistance Association and served the country during the Civil War.

Irene Kalliga was honoured with medals and distinctions by many institutions for her services:

- Red Cross Medal
- Medal and the "Certificate of Patriot" from the General Harold Alexander, Governor of Allied Forces in the Mediterranean.
- Silver Medal of the year of Emigrant Hellenism for her contribution in the reinforcement of ties between Greeks of the Diaspora and the mother land.
- Medal of Benevolence of the Greek State.

After the war, as a member of the Committee of Commissioned Ladies of the Royal Welfare, she organised the Housekeeping Faculty "Saint Olga" in Florina – North South Greece, which she visited very often.

Irene Kalliga was active and in other cultural areas, like the Benaki Museum, of which she was president and the Greek Marine Club, founder of which was her father Antony Benakis.