

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY OF THE LIFE OF MRS. ISABEL PAVÓN DE CALDERÓN

Isabel Pavón de Calderón was born in the Parish of Quichinche, Canton of Otavalo, Province of Imbabura, Ecuador on 25 October 1929. Her parents were Segundo Pavón-Barrera and la Clementina Mejía-Erazo. She was the fifth of nine siblings. Her elementary school was “La Inmaculada Concepción” operated by the Mothers of Charity nuns, and her secondary school was the Colegio Nacional “Otavalo”, both in that town.

She moved to the city of Quito and worked for the Ministry of Public Works and Communications. She married Captain Gonzalo Calderón-Encalada. They had no children together, but she raised her husband’s son and daughter, Jaime and Graciela Calderón-Jurado.

She learned of the Bahá’í Faith through her brother, Raúl Pavón-Mejía, who taught her the Faith and became her spiritual father. She accepted the Faith in 1960 and since then was a full-time Bahá’í, active in the field of teaching. She became her brother Raúl’s private secretary, helping him in his plans to spread the Bahá’í Message through the media, especially by radio. Later, when Raúl was appointed as Counselor, Isabel was his right hand and helped him perform his vital functions. Regarding the radio, in 1975 the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador had issued its recommendation to have a Bahá’í radio station to spread the Faith, and charged Isabel with making the arrangements with the Government of Ecuador, including the operating permit, and the frequency allocations for medium- and short-wave. With tireless effort over years of insistent work with the authorities of the Ministry of Public Works and Communications, she got permission by 1977 for the Radio Bahá’í station to begin legal operation. This landmark was due to Isabel’s constancy, and Radio Bahá’í of Ecuador was the first Bahá’í radio station in the world. In 1978 and 1979 Isabel was Director of the Radio Bahá’í.

The first teaching team at the local level, especially for the indigenous zone, was (Isabel’s parents) Segundo Pavón, Clementina Mejía, and their children. Isabel played an active part in creating lyrics and music for songs with a Bahá’í message that were used for teaching in the countryside. Some of her songs are still sung at Bahá’í meetings.

As a Bahá’í, Isabel performed the duties of: Member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the community of Quito, Member of the National Teaching Committee, Member of the Radio Bahá’í Committee, and Member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Ecuador, for years as its Secretary. She was appointed as an Auxiliary Board member for propagation and protection of the Bahá’í Faith in Ecuador, and later as a member of the Continental Board of Counselors for the Americas. As an Auxiliary Board member, she visited most of the country, helping attain the goals assigned to Ecuador by the Universal House of Justice and subsequently the goals set by the National Spiritual Assembly. She always focused on deepening and spiritualizing the believers, especially new believers, through personal visits, deepening courses, work to consolidate Bahá’í homes and, as part of her responsibility, helped Local Spiritual Assemblies operate optimally. She was always visiting and encouraging individuals, especially pioneers.

As an Auxiliary Board member, she always worked closely with her Assistants. She assigned each of them a zone of responsibility. She advised and deepened them in meetings prepared for that purpose. If a city was about to lose its Local Spiritual

Assembly, Isabel would move to that city and teach personally with her assistants' help. This happened particularly in the city of Riobamba where, with the help of Teresita Jara and Alberto Carbo, both now deceased, they strengthened that Local Spiritual Assembly and elected Local Spiritual Assemblies in indigenous communities. They did not neglect the urban parishes where a Local Spiritual Assembly needed to be formed and helped to operate. After three months away, she returned home to Quito. She did this in any of the cities or places that needed her help.

In 1973 as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador, she was a Delegate to the Third International Convention of the Bahá'ís of the world in Haifa, Israel to elect the Universal House of Justice. She then went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Places in Iran, accompanied by Mrs. Nooshin Eskandari, a Bahá'í pioneer in Ecuador.

In 1977 she attended, as a representative of Ecuador, the First International Conference of Bahá'í Women of South America, in Lima, Peru. She broadcast the Bahá'í Message by radio and was interviewed by journalists in Lima.

She lost her husband on 8 June 1980. She mitigated her pain by devoting herself to teaching trips and putting all her energies into teaching, into loving and serving Bahá'u'lláh.

In 1998 she had the privilege of being part of Ecuador's delegates to the Eight International Bahá'í Convention in Haifa, Israel to elect the Universal House of Justice's nine members.

From 1984 through 1999, i.e., for 15 years, she helped her sister, Clemencia Pavón de Zuleta, run vacation camps in Cuicocha for children age 6 to 12, including the responsibility of feeding as many as 70 children attending these camps. In her family, after her parents and her brother, Raúl, passed away, she assumed responsibility for keeping her siblings and relatives united.

In 1984, she was appointed a member of the Continental Board of Counselors for the Americas, which expanded her area of service to the Faith considerably. In addition to Ecuador, she was assigned Peru, and worked directly with the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Peru to prepare teaching plans and projects. She visited Bolivia and also worked with their National Spiritual Assembly. In Peru she participated directly with the First Youth Group of the High-Altitude Plateau (Altiplano), and met with the Auxiliary Board members in Chucuito. She held courses for Assistants at the Juli Institute. She taught the Aymara people. She gave Spiritualization courses for Peru's Bahá'í Radio staff in Chucuito. In Bolivia, she also gave courses and talks to the Bahá'ís of La Paz, visiting, teaching and deepening in Caracollo. When she visited Brazil, she worked with the indigenous people, and attended a women's meeting in Bombao. When she visited Costa Rica, she gave talks to women, worked with children and youth at the Bajo Coem Institute, with pioneers and with the Local Spiritual Assembly there. In Chile, she met with the Mapuche people. She pursued similar activities in Guatemala and Paraguay.

With Hand of the Cause Amátú'l Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm and the Counselors of the Americas, Isabel took part in the International Bahá'í Conference entitled "Uniting Women" held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 28 February 1990.

A meeting of the Continental Board of Counselors with the members of the Universal House of Justice asked her to travel to Spain and work with the National Spiritual Assembly there, teaching the Faith in the gypsy community, to elect their first Local Spiritual Assembly. She agreed, and in Torrevieja the first gypsy Local Spiritual Assembly was elected. She also met with the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Alhambra and Granada.

When no longer a Counselor, she was elected once again to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ecuador and served as Secretary for a number of years.

She moved to Otavalo and, on a trip with her sister Clemencia, from Otavalo to Ibarra, they had a traffic accident. She died on Thursday, 30 March 2000 at 11:00 a.m. Her remains were laid to rest in the Otavalo cemetery.

Her death has left a vacuum that cannot be filled, an emptiness felt by her relatives and by the national and international Bahá'í community. She set, for present and future generations, the best example of perseverance, uprightness and faith in service to our beloved Cause. As shown in this biographical summary, Isabel Pavón de Calderón gave her whole life and everything she was to Bahá'u'lláh and to her always beloved Faith.

Written by Clemencia Pavón de Zuleta
Ibarra, 20 March 2009

FOTOGRAFÍAS



En la Conferencia internacional Bahá'í "UNIENDO LAS AMERICAS" Buenos Aires Argentina 28 de Febrero al 1 de marzo de 1990.



Otavaló Diciembre 1990 recibiendo la Placa otorgada por la Asamblea Espiritual Nacional de los Bahá'ís del Ecuador al término del segundo año Muhajir



En Granada España 1988