

The remarkable **Dorothy Kneeder Lawenda** brought personality, grace, and vision into the world of high-end interior design and furnishings. Always a risk taker in every aspect of her life, she was rewarded with a remarkable journey, which has cemented her and husband Harry Lawenda's place as trailblazers in the design industry.

After the founding of KneederFauchère in San Francisco in 1948, this pioneering woman entrepreneur is credited with the creation of Jackson Square -- the nation's first cohesive design district. Dorothy's gift was to see beyond what was at the time a blighted, forgotten business area. Instead she envisioned tree-lined streets framing handsome showrooms featuring the finest in home furnishings. Her concept of a design community and idea of a multi-line showroom were to be repeated in most major American cities over the next 40 years.

Married to designer Harry Lawenda in 1950, the two became the unofficial ambassadors of the burgeoning San Francisco design community. They arrived in Los Angeles in the early 1960s and quickly helped to set LA's design scene in motion. They opened one of the first showrooms on Robertson Boulevard, laying the foundation for that neighborhood's reputation as a design mecca. In the 70s Dorothy and Harry were also among the first to establish a premier showroom in the Pacific Design Center. Today this 20,000 square-foot showroom remains a cornerstone in the world of interior design and home furnishing.

One of the greatest joys of Dorothy and Harry has been the discovery and support of designers they believed were destined for greater things. Renowned twentieth-century designers, Sam Maloof, Jack Lenor Larsen, and Robin Roberts of Clarence House, were among the young talent Dorothy and Harry encouraged and nurtured. Support of rising talent and a passion to seek out and represent the best continues to define what KneederFauchère stands for today.

All of this didn't come easy to Dorothy. Before arriving in San Francisco, Dorothy and her family had been incarcerated in the notorious Japanese prison camp, Santo Tomas. It was during this time Dorothy met Lucienne Fauchère and formed a friendship. Coming back to the United States, Dorothy followed a passion for the beauty she experienced in Asia and invited Lucienne to the States. Together they started an importing business of grasscloth wallpapers from Japan and Korea. The business is still thriving today.

Dorothy celebrated life and loved the design business. She once remarked, "The best thing about this business is that it's not boring. Every day is different." Dorothy passed away last December. Her pioneering spirit, superb taste and generosity still inspire and set a beautiful example of how we should strive to live. All of the family -- Harry, Ann, Wendy, Douglass, and Kent and Kevin Lawenda and business partners George Massar and Doug Kinzley -- thank Project Angel food and Divine Design 2009 for this special recognition.

