

## Dorothy Leib Harrison Wood Eustis



Dorothy Harrison was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on May 30, 1886, into an old Philadelphia family. Her father, Charles Curtis Harrison, owned a prosperous sugar refining company. Dorothy was the youngest of six children. She was educated at private schools in Philadelphia and Eastbourne, England. In 1906, at the age of 20, she married Walter Abbot Wood, Jr. and moved to Hoosick Falls, New York. Walter was considerably older than Dorothy.

Walter A. Wood, Jr. was a New York State Senator and owned the Wood Mowing and Reaping Machine Company. They lived on the Wood Estate and had two sons, Walter III in 1907 and Harrison in 1914. Mrs. Wood took an active interest in the Wood farm by selectively breeding cattle to increase milk production.

Wood died in 1915, and two years later Dorothy moved to Radnor, Pennsylvania., where she married George Eustis of Aiken. Mr. Eustis's stepfather was celebrated concert pianist, Josef Hofmann. Mr. Hofmann owned a large chalet on Mt. Pelerin, overlooking Vevey, Switzerland. Dorothy asked to rent the chalet and planned to establish a breeding and training kennel there. In 1923, she moved with her husband, her two children and their German Shepherd, Hans, to Switzerland. She named her new kennel Fortunate Fields. Elliott S. Humphrey, who was born in Saratoga Springs, came to the kennels to work with them on the selective breeding of dogs.

They developed a strain of German shepherd of great intelligence, loyalty, and an excellent disposition. The dogs from their kennel were soon used by the Swiss army and city police departments in Europe. In 1927, the Eustis family learned of a school in Germany that trained dogs to help blind soldiers. Dorothy wrote an article about the German school for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Morris Frank, a blind man from Nashville, Tennessee read the article and contacted them about the program.

In 1928, Frank traveled to Switzerland to receive Buddy, a specially trained dog, and learned how to work with him. When he returned to Nashville, Frank and Buddy received much publicity. Other blind individuals made inquiries about getting a dog. In 1929, Dorothy Eustis returned to the United States and established the *Seeing Eye*, a training school for dogs and owners in Nashville. In 1932, the school settled permanently in Whippany, New Jersey. Buddy, the first seeing eye dog, died on May 24, 1938. His death was reported in the *New York Times*.

Dorothy Eustis remained president of the *Seeing Eye* until 1940. Most of her money went into the organization. Because she invested her fortune wisely, the organization has required no fund-raising since 1958. "From the beginning, she restricted the sale of her guide dogs to individuals of sufficient maturity, strength, ambition, and financial means to benefit from the freedom that a guide dog made possible."

Dorothy died in New York City on September 8, 1946. Over 1,300 guide dogs were supplied to the blind during her lifetime. She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2011.