

FROM 'CELLO TO CELLAR

Famous Musician Now Runs An Australian Country Hotel

(By RAY WILLIAMS; Pictures
by GORDON SHORT)

IN the cellar of a three-storied brick hotel in Taree, a country town of 7,000 people in the beautiful Manning River district of New South Wales, I watched the proprietor tapping 18-gallon kegs of beer.

The hands that swung the keg and rammed home the piping were the hands of a great 'cellist who, not so long ago, thrilled audiences of 15,000 in the Hollywood Bowl; hands which have entranced millions of music lovers throughout the English-speaking world for more than 20 years, and have won praise from the greatest critics.

They were the hands of the Australian Lauri Kennedy, who has starred with the masters of orchestra, song and instrument, and who proposes to make a world tour in a year or so.

Why Not?

Lauri and his wife, famous as Dorothy Kennedy (and Dorothy McBride) have been back in Australia from America since July, 1944. They were unable to find or buy a home—so they bought an hotel.

"Why not?" said Lauri, adjusting the gas pressure on the beer. "For more than 30 years I have lived in hotels, and paid. Now I'll live in one and it will pay me."

Staying with an uncle, J. J. Keenan, of Point Piper, Sydney, in whose care



As a cellarman (left), Lauri Kennedy works in a similar attitude to his playing position (right). But nowadays he rarely touches the instrument, saying that he will be improved by the rest.

Lauri grew up, the Kennedys were considering buying a block of flats to find a home in Australia, where wartime cessation of building has created an acute housing shortage. Then a business friend offered them the unexpected chance of a good country hotel.

"So we have a home and a new hobby," said the artist, who had one of the loveliest houses in Hollywood.

Success Story

Few success stories are more spectacular than that of Lauri Kennedy, the Australian boy who stalked the stage in baggy pants and sang comic songs with barnstormers. As an extra turn he

played almost every musical instrument to small straw-chewing audiences.

Even then he was good, and while still a boy he toured India with a troupe. Among his instruments he had two favourites—the trumpet and the 'cello.

From the hurly-burly of trouping, Lauri graduated to the Hollywood Bowl, Carnegie Hall, the Royal Albert Hall, and to the company of the musically great.

He became a protégé of Melba. Once he played with several others at a little concert in the Albert Street Conservatorium, unaware that Melba was present. He did not suspect that he was remoulding his life.

When he finished his selection, Melba led the applause, shouting, "Bravo! Bravo! Encore! He must play an encore!"

Through the confusion came a summons from Melba. To the still bewildered young man the diva said, "What are you doing here? You have a great talent and a career before you. You must go abroad."

The youth asked nervously where he should go.

"England," she replied. "No, America first, and then England."

At this stage of his career, Kennedy was also a skilful boxer, but he gave up his favourite sport lest he injure his now all-important hands.

Marriage

It was then that he met Dorothy McBride. She was Adelaide born and had inherited musical talent from her father, organiser and conductor of the famous South Australian Thousand-voice School Choirs, and her mother a successful soprano. Dorothy's sister, Daisy McBride, was wife of Lauri's friend and cousin, the poet and playwright, John Drinkwater.

Dorothy as a child showed musical talent, and in her teens won a scholarship to the Elder Conservatorium, Adelaide, where she was the youngest player to obtain the degree of Bachelor of Music.

John McCormack was urging her to take her art to U.S.A. and England even at the moment that Melba was giving the same advice to Kennedy. They married and went abroad together.

New York awed and humbled them. Lauri grew increasingly anxious. He had no work and no income. People named in Melba's letters of introduction were

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Lauri and Dorothy Kennedy stroll across the main street of Taree. In the background is their modern hotel.



From bow to bar: Kennedy (left) draws beer for three customers, including his uncle, J. J. Keenan (right).