

KRLA LEAVES ITS 'HEART AND SOUL' IN PASADENA

By DENNIS McDOUGAL,
Times Staff Writer

I didn't think it would happen this way," ex-morning deejay Dave Hull said Saturday morning, standing on the steps outside the locked doors of the empty KRLA-AM (1110) studios in Pasadena.

After 43 years in the same location, the heart and soul of rock 'n' roll quietly pulled up stakes and moved to Los Angeles Friday. But aside from a modest Friday afternoon wake, nobody seemed to pay much notice.

"This never would have happened 20 years ago when we were all trench fighters," Hull sighed. "Where are those trench-fighting suckers supposed to be? This wouldn't have happened if we were younger."

Technically, the KRLA of old that never wavered from its Top 40 (circa 1965) format is still very much alive. It continues to broadcast oldies-but-goodies from a new studio.

In fact, according to the New Jersey-based radio station chain that bought "The Heart and Soul of Rock 'n' Roll" for \$16 million last July, KRLA will actually be better than ever, once the new staff—and remnants of the old—settle in at the new Wilshire Boulevard home.

There, in the clean, modern high-rise offices of Greater Media Inc., KRLA will share space with its new sister station, KHTZ-FM (97.1). It is a pairing that Greater Media calls "the L.A. Combination" and will allow management to double its appeal to advertisers (two stations for the price of one) as well as lower operating overhead.

Greater Media has even hired a stable of venerable oldies talent: the "Real Don Steele" for afternoon drivetime, former KRLA program director Art Laboe in the evening and "Emperor" Bob Hudson, who took over Hull's 5 to 9 a.m. shift this week.

But others, such as talk-show host Mario Machado and afternoon deejay Michelle Roth, are gone along with the tacky but wonderfully accessible old studios where the likes of Jim Hawthorne, Ten-



Former KRLA deejay Dave Hull—looking for work again.

nessee Ernie Ford, "Squeakin'" Deacon and Spade Cooley held court long before KRLA's golden age in the mid-'60s.

"I grew up about two blocks from here and I used to play hooky . . . tell my mother I was sick and had to stay home from school so I could ride my bike over to KRLA and watch the jocks," Hull said.

The old Carriage House adjacent to the staid Huntington Sheraton Hotel was home to the KRLA studios for a generation. The glassed-in recording booth just inside the front door was the arche-

Please see KRLA, Page 8

KRLA

Continued from Page 1

typal Home of the Deejay where fans could walk in and meet the deejay they heard playing their favorite records.

Like dozens of his peers, Hull caught his first glimpse of on-air glory during his hooky days in the 1940s, sneaking in to watch Hawthorne create a make-believe world over the radio.

Twenty years later, when Hull became a member of rock radio royalty in KRLA's heyday, he created his own imaginary radio world. As one of the KRLA "Hit Men" (along with Hudson, Ted Quillan, Casey Kasem, Reb Foster and others), Hull was guru to Southern California's baby boom generation when they were little more than babies.

That deejays come and deejays go is a given in the world of radio. Hull, a 51-year-old father of five, is living testimony, having been hired and fired at familiar stations all over Los Angeles: KGBS, KMPC, KFI and, of course, KRLA, where he first achieved his major prominence in Los Angeles broadcasting in 1963 as the Hullabalooer.

In 1966, he was fired from KRLA for the first time.

"It was tough, gathering the family together for those conferees every few years and having to say, 'Kids, Dad was fired again,'" Hull recalled.

In 1981, he was back on KRLA—part of a revival engineered by station manager Bert West in hopes of recapturing some of the KRLA glory days. It was West, too, who fired Hull from KRLA for the second time. He told Hull that last Friday was his final day.

"I could have stayed, but they wanted me to take a 35% pay cut and I would have had to drive all

the way to the new offices over in Hollywood," Hull said. "There was never any negotiation. They wouldn't even talk to me."

In his final years at KRLA, Hull spawned Dickie Dark to help him on his morning show. The running character, played by KRLA newscaster Richard Beebe, was the personification of all the manic-depressive qualities of an American cliché: the itinerant radio personality who is an anonymous broadcast star one day and simply anonymous the next.

"Remember the shotgun shooting at a Monterey radio station? It was about two years ago and that's how Dickie Dark began," Hull said. "Some guy came in and shot the place up and scared the devil out of the woman who was the announcer."

The real-life incident led to the creation of Dickie Dark whom Hull "called" at the Monterey station to get reaction on the shootout. After that first call, Hull followed Dickie's "career" as he was "fired" and "hired" on stations across the country.

"Dickie told us that the shooting turned out to be a real great promotion for the station. That's the kind of character this guy is."

—At one station, Dickie had Cabbage Patch dolls dropped from B-29 bombers, after which Dickie was promptly fired.

—At another, Dickie held a trivia contest and awarded a couple a weekend in a New Jersey motel. The motel owner threw the couple out after discovering that Dickie had welshed on an advertising trade-out agreement and failed to broadcast the motel's radio ads at prime time.

—When Milwaukee suffered a sudden drop in its water supply, Dickie (then working at a Wisconsin station) told Hull he had listeners helping the city by drawing water from their taps, running down to the municipal reservoir

and pouring it into the lake.

"We had Dickie arm wrestling listeners until he was beaten by a very small lady Marine. We had him doing all kinds of things before he got fired and moved on. The most frightening thing is that most of these promotions were *actual* promotions I read about in the newspapers!"

Hull said he has mixed feelings about poking fun at Dickie now because, "I may be back in those small markets doing those same things now. I think Dickie Dark's my alter ego."

Hull's not waiting by the phone for the next offer.

He and two partners are putting together a video version of a radio program he first introduced in the mid-'70s at KMPC called "Love Lines"—a kind of "Dating Game" for the homely, the overweight and the very lonely man or woman. He will tape five episodes this week and put it out for syndication.

But less than 48 hours after his final morning shift inside the old KRLA studios, Hull said he misses radio. Fans who used to wave at Hull through the plate-glass window where he cued up another record and cracked a morning joke call on the KRLA phones in vain attempts to get him back on the air.

An insurance agent, a photographer and a merchandising firm all still maintain offices at 1401 S. Oak Knoll Ave. on the grounds of the Huntington Sheraton Hotel, but not KRLA.

Saturday morning, as Hull sat on the steps outside the old Carriage House, high winds blew dozens of old multicolored "KRLA Hit Lists" around the parking lot and a half-dozen trash cans brimmed over with the refuse of an abandoned institution: old files, bumper stickers and party debris from the Friday afternoon farewell party.

"I was invited," Hull said. "But I didn't go."