

# Dillon

## Cop goes Hollywood, finds happy ending

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worshipped at the Lively Stone Church of God on St. Louis Avenue.

"He puts God first in his life," said Dillon's mother, Hazel Marie Dillon. "It seems to me that he has stayed on track. When he thought I was discouraged, he would tell me, 'Mom, keep the faith. You know what you taught us. Everything is going to be all right.'"

Oscar Dillon learned to play guitar from his father when he was 5. For many years, he played bass for the church and for gospel and secular groups, and he continues to play professionally.

In high school, he wrestled and played baseball and football. After high school, he applied for the St. Louis Police Department, but the Green Bay Packers and Washington Redskins also showed an interest. He scrimmaged with the Packers, but when he returned to St. Louis, he was informed that he had been accepted by the police department.

"They wanted to hire me right away," Dillon recalls. "At the time, I was married and had a son, and I needed some urgent money to get life going."

"Besides, I had really gotten fed up with the crime and violence in the streets, and I thought I could make a difference."

He started his nine-year career with the police department in 1974 as a patrolman and soon became a detective. He immediately began to see the effect of drugs in the community.

"There was a lot of violence and bloodshed," he said. "It kind of turned my stomach, so I became an undercover detective so that I could get to the core of the drugs in the city. I wanted to get the big guys — not realizing how widespread this thing was. I thought that I could go out and arrest 500 people and the whole city would be better."

He did arrest a lot of bad guys, but he found himself involved in too many violent situations, many of them involving children and teenagers. He tried another approach to reaching youths, through an Officer Friendly program, and spoke at elementary schools and community centers.

"I used my body-building to impact youngsters who also wanted to be strong," he said. "I felt that I had to catch the kids and talk to them before they got to the point of low self-esteem and drug sales. I had to do a lot of community work, more or less letting people know that the police are not the enemy."

After another shootout in the early 1980s, Dillon was examined by a physician who challenged him to do something different with his life.

"He told me that I needed to get out of here and go someplace like Hawaii or California where my talents could be recognized," said Dillon. "That made me open my eyes a little bit. I kind of knew that I was going to do that someday, but by him mentioning it, it really hit me."

"I thought, I can do this for the next 20 years and not gain anything for myself in terms of what I really wanted to do," he said. "What I really wanted to do was make an impact, but all I was doing was picking up dead bodies and arresting people."

Dillon resigned from the force, packed up his belongings and gave them to his family.

"I loaded up my Corvette, had a meeting with my family the night I was leaving, and I took off ... more or less on a mission."

"I wanted to improve my physique, and I got tired of street thugs testing me out because I wasn't part of a gang. I got attacked a number of times, so I found that martial arts and weight lifting became a way to defend myself."

Oscar Dillon, former St. Louis police officer, now an actor

In Los Angeles, he didn't know where to go for a job, so he did what came naturally: He entered and won the Orange County Muscle Classic, a body-building contest. He was offered a spot on a television commercial, which led to another commercial.

He was recognized in one of the commercials by Andrew Davis, a former police officer he had worked with in St. Louis. Davis was head of security for Motown Records and hired Dillon as a bodyguard for Michael Jackson and the Jackson family.

Dillon learned that Universal Studios was looking for muscle men for a new show. When he arrived there, he saw more than 2,000 body builders waiting in a three-block line. The directors and producers needed only 10. After more than eight hours in line, he started to get discouraged and decided it was not worth the wait.

"As I got ready to leave, one of the guys who was handling the parking lot said, 'Where are you going, man?'"

Dillon replied: "I'm out of here. This is crazy." And then, Dillon said, "the guy said: 'You shouldn't leave, man, because you look awesome. ... It won't be long because they are cutting guys left and right.'"

Eventually, a director gave him a script Dillon began to get nervous because he had never done any acting. The character was an evil sorcerer with a voice like that of actor James Earl Jones.

"I read that and he said, 'That's

not good enough,'" said Oscar Dillon. "You're being Oscar. I want you to be this character."

After Dillon read it again the director became excited. "He started jumping up and down. He shook my hand, pulled out his card and said, 'Welcome to Universal Studios.'"

That was the beginning of Dillon's acting career. For the next 10 years, he starred as a gladiator in the "Conan the Barbarian Live Show" at Universal.

Billy Hufsey, an actor and singer, has known Dillon almost since arriving in Hollywood.

"Oscar is a total gentleman," said Hufsey, who appeared in the "Fame" television program in the 1980s. "He is the opposite of what he looks because he is very intimidating, but he's got a heart bigger than his own body."

Hufsey says he first saw Dillon in a commercial for the Conan show.

"He was excellent in the show," said Hufsey. "What's amazing is that he's a guy that's 250-270 pounds who can move so smoothly. Generally big guys are pretty clumsy, but he's a pretty amazing athlete."

### Living the dream

The Conan show led Dillon to roles in more than 45 movies, 70 commercials and 80 television appearances. The movies include "Magic Island," "The Wood," "Biker Boys," "Batman Forever," "Tango and Cash," "Perfect Target," "Another 48 Hours" and the upcoming "The Cat in the Hat," starring Mike Myers. His television appearances include "The Young and the Restless," "Family Matters," "Spy TV" and "Beverly Hills 90210." Oscar Dillon is represented by the Jack Lippman Agency in West Hollywood, Calif., and has a Web site, www.bigodillon.com.

He has also become active with organizations that help children, including the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Ronald McDonald Cancer Camp, the American Red Cross and the Star Light Foundation, which raises money for children with diabetes or Down Syndrome and who are dysfunctional or homeless.

"My mission has expanded, more or less, since I left St. Louis," he said. He helps with annual toy drives, visits children's hospitals and speaks at elementary schools, with a special emphasis on helping boys.

"It seems to me that he has stayed on track. When he thought I was discouraged, he would tell me, 'Mom, keep the faith. You know what you taught us. Everything is going to be all right.'"

Hazel Marie Dillon, Oscar Dillon's mother

"A lot of times, young boys are out of control," he said. "They are fatherless and end up in gangs, carrying guns ... and more or less bad boys. They've challenged everybody. But when I get to the classroom, they don't challenge me, because they are afraid of me. But once I get through that fear, a hug changes everything."

Dillon isn't a household name and hasn't landed the mega-payday, but he says he's managed to make a comfortable living out of his showbiz career.

"With my resumé and experience, I believe I'm on the cusp of something really big," he says.

Until then, Dillon's dream and motivation remain the same: helping people, especially black children.

His message to them:

"If you are living in an environment where you think there is no hope, stay in school, get your education, work out your body ... strengthen your mind and your body ... be an individual and never follow the crowd. Be your own person and pursue your dream. It's not going to be easy, but you've got to believe in yourself."

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