



ROBERT COHEN / POST-DISPATCH

Oscar Dillon plays guitar at his mother's home in Vinita Park to entertain his nephew, Rayfield Cameron Taylor, 12. Dillon then headed home to Los Angeles last week to begin shooting on the ABC police drama "10-8."

City cop who went Hollywood comes home to happy ending

Oscar Dillon has had success in acting, but he keeps his eye on his main goal: helping young stars.

BY D. PAUL HARRIS
Of the Post-Dispatch

Oscar Dillon became a St. Louis police officer in the 1970s because he wanted to make a difference in his city.

Then he found another way to make an impact on people's lives on a broader scale: He became a Hollywood actor and stuntman.

"While I was praying, I got a revelation that there was something bigger for me to do," Dillon said. "I asked God to show me what that would be."

Dillon wanted to help children learn that although they were born in the ghetto, they didn't have to stay there. But the scope of his dream was bigger than he first realized.

"I wanted to help people all across the country and not just in St. Louis," he said.

How did Dillon's search lead him from shootouts and body bags on the streets of St. Louis to the glamour and magic of multimillion-dollar sets and stages in Hollywood?

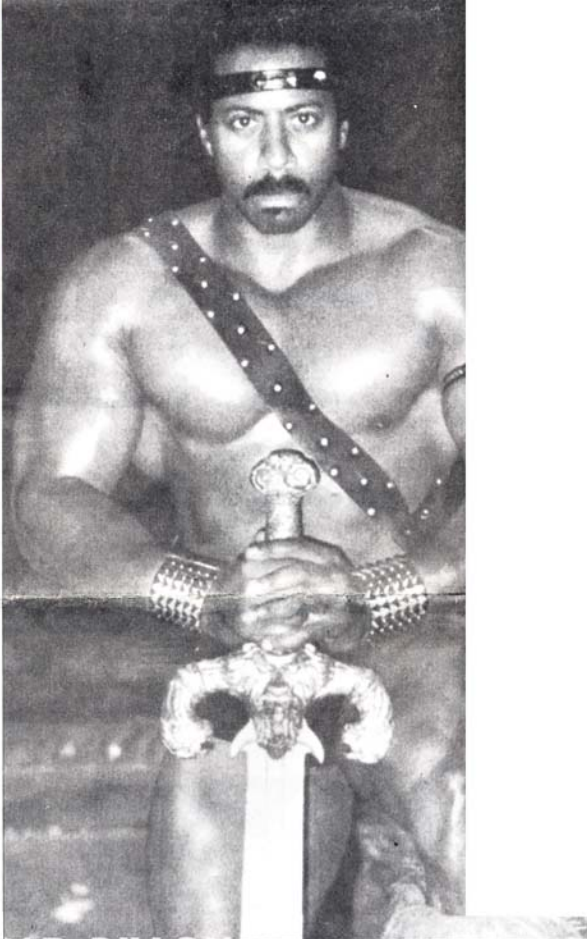
Dillon, 51, who is known as Dig O, was born at the old Homer G. Phillips Hospital. He attended St. Louis schools, graduating in 1971 from Soldan High School. He studied psychology and criminology at Forest Park Community College.

Growing up, Dillon always believed that he was different from others. He was a quiet, muscular boy who loved sports. Dillon began in martial arts when he was about 8 and became a black belt by the time he was 12. But the sport that he learned to love the most was weight lifting.

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

He started to compete in body building and power-lifting contests and won numerous local, state and regional competitions.

"He stopped robberies and apprehended quite a few suspects and felons. In his eight years in police work, he probably did more than a lot of guys who have had 25 to 30 years on the force. He's a great guy. I can't think of any better."



This is how Dillon looks in character for Universal's "Conan the Barbarian Live Show."

"Mr. Dillon was an idol around St. Louis," recalls Daniel Taylor, a firefighter and former St. Louis police officer. "He started a lot of guys off into body building."

Dillon was also quite a police officer, says Taylor.

"I can give him the credit for a

lot of my training, because he taught me the right way," said Taylor. "I know that he saved lives, but there are a lot of good things that he did that he didn't talk about because he's modest."

"He stopped robberies and apprehended quite a few suspects and felons," Taylor added. "In his

eight years in police work, he probably did more than a lot of guys who have had 25 to 30 years on the force.

"He's a great guy. I can't think of any better. He was the last action hero in St. Louis."

Sgt. Carl Randolph of the Vinita Park Police Department recalls Dillon's urging him to quit smoking and start training.

"It took a little bit of time, but he finally convinced me," he said. "To this day I still don't smoke, and I still work out."

Dillon was reared in a Christian family with devoted parents and five siblings who