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THE BIG O OPENS UP ON EVE OF BIG HONOR



Michael E. Keating/The Enquirer

Oscar Robertson, UC's all-time leading scorer and one of the greatest basketball players ever, allowed The Enquirer in his home this week and discussed his life, beliefs and the city of Cincinnati.

UC's basketball legend quietly lends grace to adopted home

He thinks about things. Oscar Robertson is a citizen of Cincinnati, but also of the world. He's curious, he wonders. He's engaged. That doesn't make him unique among pro athletes, past and present. Just unusual. Very unusual.



Paul Daugherty

Twenty-five years ago, The Big O wanted to know why a country like Iran would take hostage citizens of the world's most powerful nation. So he read, and he read some more, until he discovered an explanation that satisfied and informed him:

It was about money. America had the Shah of Iran's money, tens of millions of dollars. He was no longer in power. The Ayatollah Khomeini was. Khomeini wanted the money.

In the early 1970s, when he played for the Milwaukee Bucks, Robertson gave Kareem Abdul-Jabbar a copy of Hermann Hesse's "Siddhartha," which Robertson described as a book of self discovery. "Kareem was looking for something," back then, Robertson said.

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OSCAR 101: A BRIEF HISTORY

Oscar Robertson was Michael Jordan well before Michael Jordan. He wasn't a high-flying acrobat on the basketball court but was considered the most complete player in the game. When Robertson retired from the NBA, he was the league's all-time leader in assists and free throws made and ranked No. 2 in scoring. In 1962, he averaged a triple-double with 30.8 points, 12.5 rebounds and 11.4 assists per game and remains the only player ever to accomplish that. That came after a college career in which he was a three-time National Player of the Year.

He is a member of the national Basketball Hall of Fame.

Tonight

Oscar Robertson will be honored at a benefit concert at Taft Theatre. He will receive the Red, White & Blue Award from EPOP International, American Express and Delta for his "unwavering spirit and support of the Cincinnati community." Proceeds from the benefit concert, featuring Brian McKnight and Kathy Wade, will go to the National Kidney Foundation and the Kidney Foundation of Greater Cincinnati. The event begins at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$38 and \$48 and are available at Taft Theatre, Ticketmaster locations and online at www.redwhiteandblue.com.

Inside

Oscar Robertson discusses a variety of subjects. **A4**



Enquirer file photo