

Rickerby Hinds:

Welcome to the Creator State, where we share stories of social innovation and entrepreneurship for movers, shakers, creators, and change makers. Each episode will celebrate success and failure, ingenuity and the endless pursuit of knowledge, from education to implementation. Join us as we explore everything in between. The Creator State.

Rickerby Hinds:

Tom Lutz knows a lot about writing. He writes about travel. He's written books about crying, nervousness, and even about doing nothing. His works have received numerous accolades, including the American Book Award, and have appeared on New York Times and Los Angeles Times bestseller list. Tom is the founding editor and chief of the Los Angeles Review of Books known as LARB. Founder of the LARB Radio Hour, the LARB Quarterly Journal, the LARB USC publishing workshop and LARB books.

Rickerby Hinds:

At UC Riverside, Tom is a Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Creative Writing, as well as the director of Writers Week, the longest running free literary event in California. Tune in to hear Tom talk with UCR magazine editor, Omar Shamout about his fiction debut, *Born Slippy*, and about writing of course. Welcome to the Creator State.

Omar Shamout:

So I just wanted to start off by just mentioning, you have a rather ... I think it's okay to say you have a rather eclectic portfolio of writing.

Tom Lutz:

I think that's fine to say.

Omar Shamout:

You've got a book of your travel writings, you've got a book about crying, a book about nervousness, and now you've written your first ... Those are all non-fiction works, and now you've written your first novel. So what led you to write a novel?

Tom Lutz:

I have been a novelist all my life in my own mind. I always thought I was going to be a novelist, I wanted to be a novelist, and I realized fairly early on that I needed a day job if I was going to be a novelist, and the day job was as an English professor. That took me down the road of writing my dissertation, which became my first book, which is the book about nervousness, and writing a couple of other academic books, and then wrote a couple other books, and then wrote a couple travel books, and all the time, the novel was the thing I was trying to do. I was just procrastinating for roughly 40 years. I finally got around to it.

Omar Shamout:

I think we can all relate. So how did you come up with the idea for this novel?

Tom Lutz:

I met a guy who monologue the way Dimitri, the character in my book did, about his daring do, about his wild life, and was exactly like Dimitri. He was a very, very happy go lucky sociopath. I mean, he was just a bad guy, and he told these stories as if ... Of course everybody would appreciate the funny nature his terrible behavior, and I got fascinated by that voice. So the book kind of came out of this character that started as a real person. Then of course what happens when you're writing fiction is that you do ... People are made up of their experiences, people are constructed by their interactions with other people and that's what happens to the characters in your book. You put them in and you kind of throw them up against another character and they become slightly different. So he's now long divorced from that original model, but that guy started the whole thing.

Omar Shamout:

How long has this particular idea been gestating?

Tom Lutz:

I think it was roughly 10 years since I've since I first put him down on paper.

Omar Shamout:

Did you find the creative process different in writing a novel compared to your other work?

Tom Lutz:

Yeah, it's much more fun. It is by far the most fun-

Omar Shamout:

Why is that?

Tom Lutz:

When you're writing non-fiction ... I mean the travel books, the two travel books are a little bit different. They were also a lot of fun to write. When you're writing research non-fiction, which was what most of my other work was, you're really trying to figure out how to present information to people and you're trying to figure out how to make it entertaining, make it fun, make it intellectually exciting how to ... You're trying to have all sorts of responses from your audience, but it's a kind of ... The task is rhetorical. So kind of figuring out how rhetorically to do what I need to do for the book.

Tom Lutz:

With fiction, It's a little bit like daydreaming, you're just daydreaming while your fingers are moving on the keyboard. You get into a very interesting fugue state, and that is not entirely different in nonfiction. While you're writing a particular passage or particular ... Especially if it's narrative history like some of my stuff was, you can get in a similar state, but in the fictional state, the characters start to do things that surprise you.

Tom Lutz:

My wife got a little peeved at me because she was writing a book at the same time and she was struggling through it, and I would be typing, and I would just burst out laughing, because Dimitri would say something that cracked me up. It didn't seem like I was writing what he was saying, he just said it. I

watched him say it. I was typing it down, as he said it. But that kind of sense of it's a cross between writing and watching a TV show or something. It's a very interesting psychological process.

Omar Shamout:

The person that Dimitri is based on, are you still in touch with this person?

Tom Lutz:

Yeah.

Omar Shamout:

Have they read the book?

Tom Lutz:

Yeah.

Omar Shamout:

What did they think?

Tom Lutz:

He said, "Excellent, Tommy." He recognizes a bit of himself in it, but of course the character in the book ends up murdering quite a few people. As far as I know, the original did not murder anyone.

Omar Shamout:

So he's told you. Anyway, so travel is something that ... It's a theme that consistently pops up in your work and you've actually written quite extensively about it. Where did that drive to travel come from?

Tom Lutz:

It started when I was a kid. I was always kind of getting in trouble for going too far from the house, from wandering away as even a small child. I've wanted to go elsewhere. I wrote an essay recently about my early reading experiences, and one of them was the Black Stallion. I just thought that kid goes, he goes to Arabia. I mean, it wasn't Saudi Arabia or anything, it was just like kind of a fake country when he goes to Arabia, and I'm thinking, "I want to go to Arabia." I wanted to get a horse to but I wanted to go to Arabia.

Tom Lutz:

Since I was a kid I wanted to ... As an 18 year old, 20 year old, 22 year old, I would stick my finger out and hitchhike and just go wherever the car was going. I would hop on freight trains and I had no idea where they were headed, and ride the freight train until it stopped, and get off and wander around, and then get back on another train and see where that was going.

Tom Lutz:

So that kind of sense of wanting to see the wide world of looking for adventure, looking for the new, looking to broaden my horizon, it's just ... I don't know. It's a pathology, I assume. I really do it way too much. I think it's just who I am.

Omar Shamout:

So how often are you traveling throughout the year, if you say?

Tom Lutz:

I'm traveling as much as I can. Now, my kids are all grown and gone, and I have the kind of job, which is an academic job where now that I'm reading travel books, every trip is a research trip, because I do write about everywhere I go. So it's kind of now integrated into my professional life, and I come up to 139 countries. I mean, who's counting besides me.

Omar Shamout:

But clearly you are. So I'm curious about the way you observe and kind of record your experiences because clearly they influence your work. So do you have a notepad with you at all times? How have your powers of observation kind of matured as you're traveling?

Tom Lutz:

I do a few things. One is I take a lot of pictures. My favorite thing to do is to take portraits. With the advent of the digital camera, picture taking is a very different kind of social activity, because you can take a picture of someone, you can show them the picture. Even if there's no language in common, you can have a kind of conversation, just real conversation about it. If they don't like it, they'll wave it off and you can take another one, and show them that one. I had this woman who she was in a market in Kyrgyzstan, in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. She was selling vegetables. She was maybe 75 years old.

Tom Lutz:

I motioned with her if it was okay to take a picture. She said, "Yes." She kind of stick her chin up a little bit and I took the picture, and she looked at it and she waved her finger, no. I went back and set up to take another one, and she stuck her chin a little bit higher, and I took that and showed it to her, no, waved the finger again, came back to the third one. By now her chin was like ... She looked like Mussolini. She was way up in the air. I took a picture. No, one more.

Tom Lutz:

Now, she was just like a comically exaggerated chin in the air. I took that one and she looked at it and she went, "Yep, that's good." So that's the one that's on my website. I have a website with photographs called [ontheroofttheworld.com](http://ontheroofttheworld.com). It's a great picture. You can see that there's some joy in her face. I mean, we were having fun. It's a way of having an interpersonal relationship, a little kind of accidental intimacy while you're on the road. That is made available by the fact of the digital cameras readout.

Omar Shamout:

So you clearly have a lot of interests, as evidenced by your work. So how do you decide what to pursue as an actual book?

Tom Lutz:

That's an interesting question. I decide to write a lot of books, many are called and few choose me. Eventually one of them starts to take off a little bit and I stay with it. I've always got four or five going at any given time, and that's why my publication history is a little odd. There'll be a gap of seven or eight

years, and then there'll be two books in the same year and that kind of thing. It's because I'm always working on several at the same time.

Tom Lutz:

Part of that is there's something very satisfying for me about what I call productive procrastination. I'm really supposed to be finishing book A, and when I have to finish book A, and book A is giving me a little bit of trouble, I go work on book B. It feels like I'm playing hooky. It feels like I'm like taking the day off. It feels like freedom. So I get a lot of work done in book B. Then book B is almost done, but I'm having a little trouble figuring out what the ending is. So I play hooky on it with books C. It's just kind of like keep moving from project to project. In a way, that saves me from one of the main perils of writing is that moment when you get stuck. I'm never stuck. I just move on to the next project and work on that. So it's kind of keeps me kind of feeling like I'm moving forward, even if I'm not moving forward on the thing I'm supposed to be moving forward on.

Omar Shamout:

Right. So some people clean the house to procrastinate.

Tom Lutz:

Yes, exactly.

Omar Shamout:

You write another book.

Tom Lutz:

Yes, and you can tell that's my choice by how dirty my house is.

Omar Shamout:

Fair enough. We are at a university. You're the chair of a department at a university. What role has education played in your life? I'm particularly interested in your role. Perhaps you can talk about your role as a fellow at the LA Institute of Humanities, and perhaps that influence.

Tom Lutz:

Interesting. Those are kind of two separate questions. The teaching part of it ... I mean, I think that even though... I mean we've talked about my travel bug as a kind of a form of pathology. That's just something I can't help but do. It's also has an intellectual justification. I do think that literature, as a field is at its best in attempt to get at the full complexity of the world in a way that no specific discipline can do.

Tom Lutz:

The biologists can tell us a lot about the living world. The chemists can tell us a lot about the way the living world functions at a cellular level. The physicists can tell us a lot about the origins of the universe. The sociologists can tell us a lot about social forces, psychologists, about psychological forces. But I think of the novel in particular that everything that's novelistic, and there's novelistic nonfiction, and there's novelistic poetry.

Tom Lutz:

The novel is the queen of the sciences. The novel is the most comprehensive form of human understanding ever developed, and the best of literature transcends all national boundaries, all cultural boundaries and is available. I talked about this as cosmopolitanism in one of my literary theory books. And that kind of knowledge of the world, of the widest possible world is the best preparation and context for doing the work I do as a scholar, and doing the work I do as a creative writer. So it's all part of this of the same package. The teaching, I think, has been enhanced a lot by the travel. The travel has been enhanced by the teaching.

Tom Lutz:

The writing has been enhanced by the travel and the teaching. And vice versa. So it's all part of the same thing. The Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities is a group that's based at USC and it's people from various colleges and universities around Southern California, but also artists, and photographers, and dancers, and writers from Southern California as well. The groups gets together once a month and has a talk and a lunch. And sometimes field trips to museums in the set for docent talks and that kind of thing. It's a way in which the community gets a little bit larger than the community at UC Riverside. Or the community at USC. So it's a way that the local community can work together, can think together, can create together.

Omar Shamout:

So given all that context, you just talked about, are you thinking about that when you sit down and write a novel? Or are you just thinking about the story, and how one thing leads to the next and how one character develops?

Tom Lutz:

Yeah, I think that when you're having that kind of fun that I was talking about earlier, when you're really just letting the characters do what they want, that happens a little willy nilly. You let your imagination go a little bit and you follow it where it takes you. That's a part of writing a novel. The second part is figuring out what you have then and how you want to shape that and where it needs to go from there. And at that point, a lot of these kind of concerns about what it means that these characters are doing, what they're doing, and how that fits in to a more global understanding of the world comes in.

Tom Lutz:

So Dimitri is a classic, charming sociopath. I think that there's no accident that I was trying to figure this guy out and finished figuring this guy out as we have a president who is, for some people, charming sociopath as well. So it's not an accident. The fact that he's an investment banker in Asia. At one point he says to the other character, "You know, Frankie, I..." Please apologize my terrible English accent, but I can't think of him except to speak in this English accent and he says, "I realized that without it, I owed it more effort. I could be rather than a capitalist pig, I could be an imperialist pig." And so he goes to Asia to be a finance banker and that kind of global capital, and how it works.

Tom Lutz:

He also ends up being a money launderer to the worst, to Robert Mugabe to the Khmer Rouge generals that are still in power in Cambodia to the worst of the worst. Frank asked him if he's also Putin's banker, and he says, "Oh, no, they do it all in house." If they need some other work done, they just seize another bank. But he's in the middle of the worst aspects of global capitalism. So that kind of sense of

responsibility to represent the world goes beyond letting the characters do whatever they want, and following them around.

Omar Shamout:

Interesting. So one of your other roles as founding editor and publisher of the LA Review of Books, could you tell us a little bit about that and how that has evolved in your role with the site now?

Tom Lutz:

Yeah, the LA Review Books, I was offered the editorship of a magazine, the editor who had been running it, a literary quarterly, a classic literary quarterly and the editor who was running it wanted to retire, wanted somebody to replace him. And I wasn't sure I wanted to do it. I just published something with him, And he liked my work. And he asked me if I would be interested, and I said, "I took it to the faculty here." To my faculty, there were 12 of us in creative writing, and I thought, "Well, it's a quarterly. If we each did one issue, nobody had to take on the whole job, but we could do one issue every three years, and rotate through."

Tom Lutz:

It would be good for the department, it would be good for the students. It would be good for the graduate students. It would be good for the university. So maybe we should do that. And Chris Abani, who was still on the faculty and fiction at that point said, "Well, I don't know why you would take a used journal, when you can get a new one for free." I said, "Because you just make your own journal. You don't have to buy anything especially if it's online, you just set up a website and there you go."

Tom Lutz:

He said, "The best thing you're going to get from them is a subscriber list of 2,000 people. If you can't get 2,000 people to read you, why bother?" So I thought, "Well, that's interesting." If I was going to edit a journal, if I was going to work on a publication, what should it be? Maybe the world doesn't need another quarterly, literary quarterly. Maybe we have enough of them.

Tom Lutz:

So what do we need? It was right when all of the book reviews, The Boston Globe book review shut down the Los Angeles Times Book Review, shut down the Denver paper, Miami paper, Chicago paper, all of them. And a lot of them I had been writing for, I've been writing reviews for three years. They all just close their doors. They couldn't write. They always lost money for newspapers. They were kind of prestige part of the newspaper. And as businessmen took over the newspapers and newspapers cut back because the digital revolution, the book reviews were some of the first things to go.

Tom Lutz:

I learned about literary culture from reading the Sunday supplement book reviews. That was my introduction to it. So I thought, "Well, people should still have that as a resource." Literary culture needs that review process in the ecology. I should do something to replace that. Kind of invent the book review of the future. And so I went back to my colleagues and I said, "What do you think? Do you think we should do this instead?" And they all said, "Yes, we should do that." It turned out they meant, "Yes, you should do that." A number of my colleagues have done pieces for us and that kind of thing, but it turned out to be that it was just me really that wanted to do it, So I did it.

Omar Shamout:

So tell us a little about the review books publishing workshop.

Tom Lutz:

This is the one of our latest endeavors. The Los Angeles Review of Books is both a book review and a kind of ongoing nonprofit literary organization, and we have kept figuring out new things to do in part because it's a nonprofit corporation, but it works just like any other company and that you either kind of grow or you stagnate. And so we've been growing and we've been growing by multiplying the kinds of things. We added a radio show, the LARB Radio Hour. Added podcasts, added channels, project where we have a religious studies channel and a Southeast Asia diasporic studies channel, and a podcast review channel and all sorts of other websites that we housed and support.

Tom Lutz:

And we've started a quarterly journal, actually a quarterly literary journal. The two latest ones are we started a book publishing wing. LARB books is publishing a number of different series. Among them LARB Libros, which Alex Espinosa, who's our latest addition to our faculty in creative writing is running a contest. He's a Tomas Rivera chair, and he's writing running a Tomas Rivera contest for first book by a young Latinx writer. Not necessarily a young Latinx writer, first book by Latinx writer. So that contest is part of the publishing program. And then we started a publishing workshop as well.

Tom Lutz:

There is a famous publishing workshop on the east coast. It's the Columbia Publishing Course, and it's one of the main feeders into the publishing industry. If you want to get into the industry, you want to be an editor, you want to publish books, you go to the Columbia Publishing Course. It's a lot of ivy league students. In publishing, most people, I think know already, publishing is a notoriously homogenous industry. It's 82% white.

Tom Lutz:

And the Columbia Publishing Course is 85% white. So they're not doing anything to help that problem. Toni Morrison was an editor, and what she found as an editor at one of the big houses in New York, was that she just wasn't getting the books that she wanted to publish, submitted to her, and she wasn't having any luck, kind of getting them through the publishing process. So she became a writer herself, in part as a response to what she was seeing in publishing. So what we wanted to do was try to diversify the pipeline into the publishing industry by starting our own publishing course and running it pretty much the same way that is we have professionals from every part of the publishing world, big houses in New York, editors at big houses, publicist from big houses, agents, who are now even more important to the process of getting books from manuscript into the bookstores.

Tom Lutz:

Distribution people, every single part book design, everything. And so people get a kind of introduction to the course and they get a kind of stamp on their passport and to the country of publishing as well. We raise money so that we can give people free tuition, so that people can attend the publishing workshop regardless of their ability to pay for it. These courses cost between three and \$5,000 in tuition, plus room and board of course. So they're expensive, which is another reason why publishing has remained so homogenous.

Tom Lutz:

So we raised money so that 80% of the people that go to the publishing workshop, the LARB publishing workshop get some kind of financial aid, and 50% get full rides, and 50% of the people that go to the workshop are non-white. So it's been a great success. We're starting our fourth year, this year. Our students should apply. And if they can't afford to pay for it themselves, we will figure out a way to pay it for them. So it's, I think, in a way, the most important thing that LARB has done.

Tom Lutz:

LARB is now a very large operation. I have a big board of directors that supports about 30% of what we do. We get grants. We have a full time staff of seven, part time of another six or seven. Still a lot of volunteers on the staff like I'm a volunteer. I'm the volunteer editor-in-chief. And so it's a group of maybe 50, 60 people all together who are working on it. Some people are very focused on the radio show. Some people are very focused on the Quarterly Journal. But we all have a sense that this is the most important thing that we've put together so far.

Omar Shamout:

Fantastic. And you've also got Writers Week coming up again. That's been a great event for UCR and the community. What has that meant to you and what should we look forward to this year?

Tom Lutz:

The Writers Week, as you know, is the oldest, continuous, free literary event on the west coast. It's a kind of venerable and an interesting institution. It's always has a little bit of the stamp of the person who happens to be directing it because all of my colleagues will give me suggestions of people that they'd like to see come in each year. And some of it comes from that. But it's a big juggling act. We have 23 or four people this year, I think. And to kind of figure out how to get them all to come to Riverside in one week and figure out where the money's going to come from to do that and how to get them all arranged. It's a lot of administrative juggling.

Tom Lutz:

So that means that I end up making a lot of decisions by fiat, as did Chris Buckley when he's running it before me as did Susan Straight was running it before Chris. And so we all kind of run it the way we think it should be run. In my case, I've always liked to have a combination of some really well known people, some of the most important people in their genres and fields. Some people that are mid career and some people that are just starting out. We always have an alumni Rainier always have people that are on their first book.

Tom Lutz:

Because UCR is a majority-minority institution, I always thought writers, we each should be a majority-minority, writing festival as well, which most of them are not, and I've not been. So that's been one of my goals and it's very easily reachable goal. There's so much great writing out there. So we've managed to do that successfully for about six years. I think it's the sixth time I've done it, the sixth and last time for me.

Rickerby Hinds:

Now, let's get into the creator state of mind. In each episode, we asked our guest to share what's been on their minds, something they can't stop thinking about, a new challenge they're facing, or what's inspired them into action recently. We call it the creator state of mind.

Tom Lutz:

The thing that's inspired me most recently is that I'm coming towards the end of my career as an academic. I'm turning 67 next month. That way, I think, was the life expectancy and the year I was born for a man. So now I'm in bonus rounds. There's there's a freedom that comes with kind of figuring out I'm done climbing ladders. I'm done getting ahead. I'm done with all of that. I am doing exactly what I want to do moment by moment. And that is, I find has been very inspiring. So I am writing faster and better than I ever have and I'm having more fun with it than I've ever had. And so there's something about hitting this age that has been a source of inspiration.

Omar Shamout:

Interesting. The end has kind of created a new beginning for your writing, it sounds like.

Tom Lutz:

Yeah. I've just published this novel of course. It came out a week ago. The next book is now going into the catalog for the fall at Columbia University Press, and that book is finished. And I'm about to finish the third travel book within the next month or so. And I've got four more going. So yeah, I'm just kind of on a tear and it's partly this sense of I don't care anymore. I don't care what people think of them. I don't care if they do well. I don't care if anybody likes them. I'm just in a sense being an artist, a full artists for the first time in my life.

Omar Shamout:

Fantastic. So what's something you can't stop thinking about right now?

Tom Lutz:

Climate change. I mean, I have children, I have grandchildren. I think this is the crisis issue of our time.

Omar Shamout:

What have you witnessed that has shocked or changed your life based on your travels and witnessing climate change?

Tom Lutz:

There are a few things. I mean, I do talk to people about it, wherever I go now. I just did a trip where, where I went across the island chain at the top of the South Pacific Islands. So from Guam to Hawaii, and stopped in Micronesia, in the Marshall Islands and number of other islands in between. These are little tiny spits of land that are sticking up out of the ocean. You know when you're landing in the airport, if you're ever watching the statistics on your screen that tells you how fast you're going and what not, what your altitude is, and everything? When we landed, we were at one foot. We're literally at one foot. We were one foot above sea level at the airport, which means if the sea rises one foot they don't have an airport anymore.

Tom Lutz:

And so I asked people in those islands, "Have you noticed the sea change because of climate change. And about a third of the people said no, they haven't noticed anything. About a third of the people I talked to said, "Yeah, it's definitely going up. I can definitely see that it's going up." And about a third of people said, "Yeah, it's definitely going down. I can see that it's going down." So there's a kind of disconnect between people's experience, if it's the hottest summer they've experienced, they find climate change to be a problem. If it's a cold winter, they think climate change is a hoax.

Tom Lutz:

So talking to people around the world has been part of it. I'm working on a project on the aridity line. Geographers are talking about a line above or below which there's not enough rainfall to support life. And that line, if you look at the Sahara for instance, is a great example. So there's a line at the bottom, a little bit of a line in parts of the top. The Mediterranean is the line at some places, but if you map the hotspots of global conflict on the globe, along with the aridity lines, you'll see an enormous number of the hotspots are on the aridity line itself. So Boko Haram is not all over Nigeria, it's on the aridity line in Nigeria. The ISIS is an aridity line phenomenon. Israel, in a sense, built an aridity line around itself by irrigating the desert.

Tom Lutz:

So there's a long long war between Peru and Ecuador that's on a desert. It makes sense, wars tend to be resource wars that is war over resources. Water is the primary resource and so it makes sense that there's all this conflict around the aridity line and so on. While I'm on my sabbatical, which is next year, I'm going to be actually going around the Sahara and interviewing people about the relationship between water resources and violence.

Omar Shamout:

Well, you talked about some new freedoms you're experiencing. Are there any new challenges you're facing at the moment?

Tom Lutz:

No.

Omar Shamout:

Wow, that's good. Good for you.

Tom Lutz:

I mean, in the sense that you mean it, which I think which is that is there something in my way?

Omar Shamout:

Yeah, I suppose.

Tom Lutz:

I mean, the challenge when you're writing, you're challenging yourself, right? I was talking about the relationship between writing fiction and watching TV that it feels like you're watching this thing unfold. But it's actually a little bit harder than watching TV, and that's because the challenge is actually making

some good sentences as you go along. And so in that sense, the challenges that I have are the challenges that I've always had, which is the challenge of doing good work.

Tom Lutz:

But that challenge is always the same. It's always the same. It just never changes. It never gets particularly harder or easier I find. I have a great job, I have a great income, I have a great family, I have a great support system. I mean, I'm among the most privileged people in the universe, and so, "No, I have no real challenges. I just have opportunities."

Rickerby Hinds:

It is always a valuable learning opportunity to take time to reflect. At the end of each interview, we like to ask our guests this: In hindsight, what is something you wish you would have known when you were starting out?

Tom Lutz:

I wish I knew life was this short. I guess that would have been a good thing to know. And basically, I wish I knew everything I know now, back then. There are people who come out into the world as young adults, really kind of cognizant of their own strengths, of their own foibles, I suppose, but their own strengths and their own, where they want to go and what they want to do. You think of somebody like Barack Obama. He came out as a young man and really did an enormous amount of stuff right away on it.

Tom Lutz:

I didn't go to college until I was in my late 20s, because I was a bit of an idiot. I was a bit of a numbskull. I was wandering around smoking pot and doing nothing, which is why that's one of the books that I've wrote, The History of Doing Nothing. And I really did not figure out how to be a productive person until I was 35 or so, 40 maybe even that I really got going. And that was partly kind of working through my stupid... I won't say the word but you know the word I would use there. It was figuring out how to be a good, decent, reasonable, productive person. It took me longer than it probably should have. If I knew then what I know now, I think that process could have been speeded up.

Omar Shamout:

You managed to turn being unproductive into very productive pursuits. Congratulations on that.

Tom Lutz:

Thanks.

Omar Shamout:

Well, thank you so much for joining us today.

Tom Lutz:

You bet. Thank you. It was a pleasure.

Rickerby Hinds:

In our next episode of the Creator State we're at the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens, with UCR alumna Denise Verret, who will share about her path to becoming the first African-American woman to lead a major US zoo. Thanks for listening. Find more information about our guest at [creatorstae.com](http://creatorstae.com). There's a team creating this podcast. Help us out by subscribing on Apple podcast, SoundCloud, Spotify, or wherever you listen. And while you're there, leave us a review.

Rickerby Hinds:

Our producer for the show is Jennifer Merrett with audio and editing by Kevin Williams, digital strategy by Kelly McGrail and Madeline Adamo. And design by Krissy Danforth, Denise Wolf, Brad Row and creative director, Luis Sanz.

Rickerby Hinds:

Special thanks to Stan Lim, Omar Shamout, Jessica Webber and Christine Suek. This show is brought to you by the University of California Riverside. I'm Rickerby Hinds. Thank you for listening to the Creator State.