

# The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

## Episode 119: Kevin Costner

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Tim Ferriss: Meow. Hello, ladies and germs. This is Tim Ferriss, and welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show. I'm on the road playing road warrior, going from hotel to hotel, attempting to do interesting things. And of course, my job is to deconstruct world class performers in each of these episodes.

I interview many different people from various fields and try to distill what makes them great; the lessons learned, the habits, routines, etc. And that ranges from four star generals, to chess prodigies, to scientists, startup CEOs and in this case, a world class story teller, Kevin Costner. Of course, I grew up loving Kevin Costner films. He is an internationally renowned filmmaker across the board, considered one of the most critically acclaimed and visionary storytellers of his generation.

Costner has produced, directed, and/or starred in such memorable films as *Dances With Wolves*, one of my favorites, *JFK*, *The Bodyguard*, remember the kitchen scene? Amazing; many scenes in that. *Field of Dreams*, *Tin Cup*, *Bull Durham*, *Open Range*, *Hatfields & McCoy's*, and *Black or White*, among many others. He's been honored with two Academy Awards, three Golden Globe Awards, and an Emmy Award. This episode also features Jon Baird, the author and illustrator of the novels *Day Job* and *Songs From Nowhere Near the Heart*.

He is the co-developer, along with Costner, of the *Horizon* miniseries.

Their first book collaboration is a beautiful tome; it's really quite something to behold: *The Explorers Guild: A Passage to Shambhala*, or Shambala; I've never known how to say that. In any case, we get into all of that and more. This episode is really split into three parts. The first part explores Costner's background, lessons learned, and we dig into a lot of his specific films and roles. And I think at some point, I refer to *The Big Chill* as *The Chill*, like a dumb-dumb, because I think I was just a wee bit nervous, honestly, since I've really only seen Kevin on the screen before.

He's a very, very focused man with intense eye contact. We had a great time and I really enjoyed it. But it's weird going from screen to in person for the first time, I've got to say. But I had a great time. I hope that translates to your experience with the conversation. We had it at his home and we touch on a lot.

The first, like I said, is his background; the history. Then we get into his current projects, including the book project, among many others. And then we do the rapid fire questions that many of you are already familiar with, and those are always fun. That's what we wrap up with. Kevin has an opportunity to get into some stories that I don't think he's really told anywhere else, and had a blast. You can say hi to him on Twitter.

He doesn't use social media much but I'm going to encourage him because he makes a couple requests of the audience, and I'm going to point you guys to Twitter. So there are some opportunities, requests that come up here @modernwest on Twitter. @modernwest is Kevin Costner. Please enjoy this long and broad conversation with Kevin Costner.

Tim Ferriss: Kevin, welcome to the show.

Kevin Costner: Thanks.

Tim Ferriss: I really appreciate you having me out here. This is a beautiful spot you have. I guess we're outside of Santa Barbara.

Kevin Costner: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: This is one of my favorite parts of the world. But you did not start out here, did you? Where were you born?

Kevin Costner: I was born in Lynwood California, lived in Compton, 1955 and was there for about six, seven years and ended up actually moving up in this general area here between Ojai and Santa Paul. I lived on a single street and went to a one room schoolhouse.

Tim Ferriss: How many students were in that schoolhouse?

Kevin Costner: I think it was the first through sixth grade so I don't know; there could have been 60 of us. I'm not sure. Maybe not even that many.

Tim Ferriss: How did going to such a small school or growing up in that way impact you?

Kevin Costner: I didn't for very long. I actually didn't like it. Because of that idea that all these kids were in the school, and the teachers' impact could be the best it could be, I was way ahead. When I went into that school, the school I had come from in Los Angeles, I was really far ahead.

My parents picked up on that really quickly and since I was such a rascal, they thought: man, he's not doing anything. I was smart enough to keep my mouth shut about being way up on this stuff. But they moved me right out of that school really quickly; back into I think a parochial school, which they don't mess around, as you know.

Tim Ferriss: So your parents were concerned that since you were further ahead, you would sit on your hands and coast through it?

Kevin Costner: I don't think they were worried about that. My parents, I'll tell you, a lot of people I know they look back on their childhood and maybe it wasn't the greatest. Mine was pretty good. Mine was very Huckleberry Finn. A lot of that had to do with my parents were very focused in on their kids. My dad and my mom were at every little league game, every everything. I've talked to people who go, my dad never came to one thing and there was probably a reason for it but I didn't have that experience.

We didn't have a lot of money but my backyard was my kingdom. And when my dad got home, we went to work in it.

Tim Ferriss: I read, and I don't know if this is true, that you were raised Baptist. Is that true?

Kevin Costner: Yes.

Tim Ferriss: How did that affect the lens through which you viewed the world?

Kevin Costner: Good question. I'll tell you, it obviously affected it. I came up in a really conservative background. My dad's from Oklahoma; tough guy, fist fighter, very hard knuckled people, and came during the Dust Bowl. If you think of Tom Joad, that's my family. They lost everything and had to come out here. So my conservative foundation was right in place. My dad would put me in my place, right in the middle of church. I could be launched right out of that seat for whatever.

And when you drink the blood of Christ, it was that grape juice and I loved pretending it was whiskey after church was over, because

they had those little glasses that you'd see in the cowboy movies. I liked to just knock it back and boy, I'll tell you, my dad was just a no nonsense guy about that.

I also grew up with music in the Baptist Church, so that was a real first love of mine, music. My grandmother taught the piano, my mom was in the choir; her sister was in the choir. So I grew up with music, was in all the little things we did, the Christmas play. I liked singing and eventually, my mom made me take piano lessons so I was trained classically on piano for about three and a half years.

Tim Ferriss: Did you always maintain that practice of music? Or is it something you've only revisited much later?

Kevin Costner: I revisited it in my 20s because I was always staring out the window.

I was taught by a teacher who wanted to train a concert pianist. So there was no boogie-woogie. The closest I got to rock was *Greensleeves*. Everything else was the classics. And my mom, being in a conservative background, she goes that's what the teacher wants; you don't step outside that line. So after about three and a half years of staring out the window watching everybody play ball, which is what I do – I'm a sports guy – my mom really got tired of feeling that she had pinned me down to that chair.

She said to me: you're going to be really sorry you gave this up. Because I was pretty good. I was able to transpose anything. If they would have let me play a little rock song, and some little girl would have sat next to me, I probably never would have given it up. But no one wanted to sit next to me playing Mozart. So the music came out of the church.

I'd say my conservative outlook came out of it. Probably what clouded me, I was a late learner on things because I would adopt my parents' point of view. What was talked about at that kitchen table was mine. Vietnam was going on. If you were against the war, you were bad. If you had long hair, you were bad. My brother went into the Marines so if somebody hated the Marines, I hated them. Now, I was like 13 or 14 and so as I was moving into high school, I wasn't very evolved, in a sense.

There was nobody who would say no, just because somebody has long hair doesn't mean they're dumb, doesn't mean they're anti establishment, anti America. But in fact, that's what I saw. And I

had to really fight a really long time to grab onto my on ability to look at the world in a more gray way.

Tim Ferriss: Was there any experience or person who comes to mind early on who helped you develop that?

Kevin Costner: No, but I can remember really being behind the curve a few times. Because my parents would say: hey, look, you've got to be able to speak your mind in these circles, whatever you need to do. But what I found was I was speaking my parents' mind. And I was not coming off very well, in a way. I was militant about things I didn't even know about. I began to sense that, that I didn't have a bigger view. I had their view. It hasn't hurt me in my life to have a conservative view but the scales came off my eyes a long time ago about things.

Tim Ferriss: I'm going to jump around chronologically a little bit. But before we jump beyond high school, so in high school you were five-two or thereabouts?

Kevin Costner: I was a sophomore, 16 years old and the reason I can say that is because when you get your license, the first thing people want to do is look at it, especially the girls. They want to look at your picture. And of course, I handed my picture over and there it is: 87 pounds, five foot two, 16 years old. I was looking below the wheel of my Datsun pickup when I drove. I was itty bitty. I began to grow in my senior year, and grow into college. I wasn't a senior at five-two. That was kind of humiliating about the time the fourth or fifth girl said, "Look at that, that's really cute; five-two." I took my license out and I never let anybody look at it again.

Tim Ferriss: Were you athletic – you mentioned playing ball – before you hit your growth spurt?

Kevin Costner: Yes. I played a lot. I had to come home when the street lights came home, and of course I didn't.

And here comes my father, dressed almost like I am right now in blue jeans and blue shirt. He was a lineman for Edison. And when they wore faded jeans, it wasn't because they were designer jeans, they were faded because they just got washed a billion, zillion times. He was as handsome as Paul Newman, I've gotta tell you and he'd come looking for me. I'd see that finger, man, and I'd be running across the street trying to get around him to get home. I just couldn't keep certain things in my head, you know?

Tim Ferriss: You mean by that the sports?

Kevin Costner: I couldn't keep track. I was like any kid.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, got it; keeping track of time.

Kevin Costner: He said look, when you see those street lights come on, you come home. Or when I'd go build a fort: you bring my tools back. Or when you take your sports stuff out, you don't leave your ball out. The hammer, the saw would be left at the fort. But my dad would go down to where I was building my fort and back came the saw, and it was all rusty. And he'd look at me, and I was thinking: man, I'm a bit of a fuckup. I don't get it right.

It's like I know to bring it back but I'm having so much fun. I was a classic 10-year-old, 12-year-old, just you have so much fun you almost can't think of the consequences.

Tim Ferriss: I think a lot of adults then spend the rest of their lives trying to recapture that feeling, in a way.

Kevin Costner: Mark Twain said it. He said, "Look, if a man lived his life correctly, he's never forgotten his childhood. He's never given it up."

Tim Ferriss: When you were five-two, you said 87 pounds?

Kevin Costner: Yeah, yeah.

Tim Ferriss: Wow, that is small. Were you kind of a rough and tumble kid? Did you get picked on a lot?

Kevin Costner: Yeah, I was really rough and tumble. I remember they asked me to go out for the wrestling team because I could get my varsity letter. You get a varsity letter. And I said: no, I'm going to be a basketball player. Because I'd always dreamed of doing the layups to the *Hawaii Five-0* theme because that's what I saw when I was a little kid. I was a good athlete. But I said no, I'm going to be that. And they go: you're not going to make the varsity at five-two.

You could wrestle at 96 pounds; get your varsity letter. And I thought, I don't want that. But they go: just go try. So I went out and wrestled the one kid that was 96. I just threw him all over the place. I got him in a headlock and he whined. He was like whining. I wasn't going to let him up. I really dominated him but I thought,

big deal; I don't want my letterman jacket in this sport. I want it in basketball. My mom promised me I'd grow.

I mean I literally was running around the house jumping up and touching the header on every door going: what in the hell, five-two? Cute? I can't be this. I'd say to my mom, which you do, I'd go, "Mom, am I gonna grow? I swear to God, am I gonna grow?" And she goes, "I promise you, you're going to."

Tim Ferriss: I had read about a heart-to-heart you had with your father at one point. I want to say in the bathtub, or you were in the bathtub?

Am I getting this right? Could you describe that exchange?

Kevin Costner: I had been working up in Aspen. I have a ranch up there, working very much like I work here. And I've got to put it into context a little bit, too. My dad was a worker, and when he would try to teach us to work, it was like we'd mow the lawn and we'd be done, at an early age. And he'd go: did you edge it? And you go: didn't edge it. So the next time we mowed it and edge it. He goes: did you wash it off? Didn't wash. He was a bit of a task master, in a way. So it was very difficult to get it exactly right.

You know, a man does a job right. And a lot of that came from the Dust Bowl. Because he saw when 100 guys would be in line to dig the same ditch. And he used to say to me, "There'd be 100 guys dig this thing if you don't dig it." So I understood that a guy had to work; that's what I was about. I had a real big problem up on the property.

And they literally watched me solve it all day long. I never stopped working. And at the end, I was actually going underwater and plugging something. I was in that cold water up there, and he watched me.

Tim Ferriss: This is your property?

Kevin Costner: This is on my property. To be honest, it was a typical day other than the fact that something broke and I really had to fix it. He watched. He watched me work. And now the day was done, and I don't take baths for the most part, but I was up in my room. I'm taking a bath; I'm beat to shit. I'm really beat up. And the door opens, and my dad walks in. So imagine, what the... what is this?

Tim Ferriss: What the hell's going on, here?

Kevin Costner: And he walks in, and I'm in the bathtub and I'm not going to sink down but I'm thinking maybe... I don't know what it is. And kind of like a dog who can't find a place to stand, he kind of walks a little bit in a circle and finally puts his arm up on the mantle. And I say that because when I designed this house, I always wanted a fireplace in the bathroom.

Tim Ferriss: Sounds amazing.

Kevin Costner: I always wanted to get out and have the fireplace. So he had his arm on the mantle. So I'm looking at him, yeah? And he starts to talk to me. He says, "You know, when you were young, you had all the things you wanted, right?" And I go, "Yeah, of course I did." He goes, "And you never felt like there wasn't anything we didn't provide, money?" He started going down this trail of did we have enough. Because he was always so worried I would go into acting. He thought a guy should work, work.

And I know he was unsure. And then he was able to see the success that I had. And so I think I wonder if he was thinking at some point, I hope I never derailed you. But nevertheless, he's going down this path; you had what you wanted, your mom and I did the best we could. And he looked at me and he says, "You know, I never took a chance in my life."

I was almost in my own Field of Dreams moment. There were some tears coming down. He says, "I came out of that goddamn fucking Dust Bowl, and when I got a job, Kevin, I didn't want to lose it. I was going to hold onto that because I knew there would always be food on the table." And I said, "There was. There was." And there was really kind of just an amazing moment, my dad sitting there.

And I'd long since been able to take care of myself. I didn't need gas money from him when I'd go visit him. And I don't know if you ever had a moment like that but I had that. You know, I didn't want him to tear up. He'd given me everything he could give me and it was just one of those moments. I'll always remember that. They just want to know that they did right by you.

Tim Ferriss: As a father yourself, has that mentality carried over to you, as well? Are you ever concerned about that?

Kevin Costner: I probably talk to my kids a little bit more than he talked to me. And I probably may have been a little bit easier on them than he was on me. You know, man, he was tapping me on the shoulder in

the morning saying: here we go; we're going to work. I don't really do that to mine. I let them see me work. They can come work side by side. I don't know who's right. I don't know if he's right; I don't know if I'm right.

You don't know until the end. I do know that early on, my dad thought: you're lazy. He'd say that to me: you're lazy. And I worked more than anybody I know. And maybe I have that in my head. It's not uncommon for me when I come out with the guys who are working on the property that I'm here before they are, and I work with them all day right next to them. In fact, the ones who don't even speak English go: is he going to be here all day?

And the other ones go: I think so. And later on, they go: I thought he was in the movies. Maybe he doesn't need to do that. And somebody says: hey, Heffe, he likes it. He likes to be out here. My own children, I tell my children I love them every day. That's what I tell them. And I tell them they're special, every day. But I always finish that sentence with "It doesn't make you better. It doesn't make you better being special. Because people out there, their sons and daughters are special. You can feel special yourself. But even if you do something that the world acknowledges, you've got to really relax because it doesn't make you better than anybody."

What they need to learn is life is different than what I do. I never was in a limousine until I was 28 years old. They've ridden in limousines going with us wherever we go since they were in diapers.

So their lessons are going to be different. And part of what I anticipate for them is to be able to share their good luck. How are they going to share their good luck? How are they going to have a sense of balance? There's no book on that. But it's something I think about and work on every day.

Tim Ferriss:

I have a friend, who was also on the podcast, named Chris Sacca, a very, very successful venture capitalist. When he was growing up – and he does this with his kids, now – his parents would put him through what he called the sweet and sour summers. So he would have some fun experience that his parents would expose him to.

But then the sour was they would be required to go do not a thankless job, but a hard, manual job like cleaning – I'm making this up – like oil refinery equipment with some task master that Dad or Mom had decided for them to spend time with to give them both perspectives.

What are the hardest jobs that have taught you the most?

Kevin Costner: My dad was the hardest on me. You couldn't be harder than my dad. So maybe that put me in a position to work. My dad said if you can stay long, you just have to out work someone. And it was really very, very basic. My own outlook for my own kids is they see that I'll work side by side with somebody. There's no difference between who I'm working with.

Tim Ferriss: Actually, this is a good time to shift gears a little bit. Talking about acting and that entire career, can you talk a little bit about your experience with *Rumpelstiltskin*?

Kevin Costner: That was a moment in my life where I think I was in my senior year at college, the start of it. I was at night school, and if you know anything about night school, you know that the people who are in night school are really serious. So the Bell Curve is really hard there, as opposed to a bunch of 18-year-olds or whatever you are. If you're in night school, it's serious. Those dudes are all drinking coffee, they're all still in their suits. I'm in accounting class, and it's not happening for me.

I know I'm not supposed to be there. I know where I'm at. I'm at the wrong end of what was going to happen when a test is taken, because I don't like it. But again, because of my conservative background, you graduate high school, you go to college, and you get a college degree and you get a job. I wasn't, really again, very advanced in my thinking or my eyes weren't open to the real possibilities. The greatest things I did were when I would go drive trucks, or frame houses, or worked on commercial fishing boats.

I like that work. I like the exoticness of that life, where you get what you get because that's what you just learned. And so academia was not a thing for me, and there I was, smack in the middle of it and realizing I was just like pulling sand down. I couldn't get out of this hole. So what do I do? I turn off to the teacher, I open up the little student newspaper, and I'm winging through the newspaper, which is all of three pages long at a college, and on the back of it was a play, an audition for a thing called *Rumpelstiltskin* on an off campus area.

And I don't know why, I just thought audition; I'd like to try that. I closed that newspaper; I listened to the person drone on. I saw the latest pop quiz and I was last. But what I knew at that moment, I

was going to that audition the next day. I was excited about the long day.

It had been a long time in my college life where I was excited about the next day. I drove down – almost was killed, literally, doing it. I was going down the 55 freeway, which is in Orange County. And at that time, the freeway hadn't been finished all the way so stoplights were on the freeway at a certain point.

Tim Ferriss: It sounds so dangerous.

Kevin Costner: And as I'm going down there, everything's fine; that's not a big problem. Except my accelerator broke and went to the floor on this old Datsun pickup. And all of a sudden, I saw the brake lights up ahead like where those eucalyptus trees are, way out there.

Tim Ferriss: A couple hundred feet from us.

Kevin Costner: Brake lights, and my speedometer is going from 60 to 70 to 80, and it's not slowing down. And I'm probably going to hit those people at about 90 miles per hour and kill them, kill myself. And the engine, I don't know why it was designed that way but the floor, like some ghost pulled it straight down to the bottom.

So I had my wits about me at one point, halfway through when I realized I didn't want to die, and I threw the clutch in. And there was never such a terrible whine but I thought; oh, my God, it did engage. But the engine was revving. I was able to turn the key off and I coasted to a stop, pulled over into the emergency lane, and didn't kill anybody. I jumped out of that fucking car, hopped over that fence and hitchhiked to my audition because I wasn't going to miss it. I left it on the freeway. I left it.

Because I had someplace I wanted to be. I had a place that something was going to happen. And of course nothing did; I wasn't good enough. I didn't have enough skill. I didn't really know about Rumpelstiltskin. I didn't know my fairy tales. I figured there was a prince; I would just leave it at that. I'll go out for the prince, maybe. But I didn't get it. But my imagination started to burn about the possibilities.

Tim Ferriss: When you had those possibilities then in your head, what were the next steps?

Kevin Costner: The reason I didn't get the part, because I wasn't very good, I could tell the people, like in accounting, they were better than me.

They were better than me. But I thought the difference was I didn't want to try to improve in accounting. But in acting, I thought, I'm going to go to school. I've found something I think I want to learn. And so one night, they started to have classes there.

One night a week turned into two nights a week, turned into three, turned into four. I suddenly started to become the student that I wasn't in college. I went to UCLA and took two classes in film financing, film budgeting. I showed up for the first day of class. I had already read the book, the entire book. I wasn't in the mood to do an all-nighter. I was interested.

Tim Ferriss: So at this point, you had graduated from college?

Kevin Costner: I graduated from college. I was framing houses out in Orange County. I would go and that's how I would make my dollars. I wasn't very good but I could work all day. If you could frame one house by yourself a day, you could get another house. But what guys were doing who were really experienced in eight hours, I was doing in 12. So I was usually out there, and I think about this time a year because the sun goes down quickly.

Guys were going home at 3:30. Sometimes they'd work in teams; some guys could frame a house by themselves. I'd do it by myself. But I wasn't finished at 3:30; I wasn't finished at 5. And I had that pickup truck, the same one that almost killed me, I'd have the lights on and I would frame with the lights on until I was done so I could get a house the next day.

Tim Ferriss: You took the classes during the day, or were those at night?

Kevin Costner: No, at night.

Tim Ferriss: Those were at night.

Kevin Costner: Then I would go at night.

All we can say without beating this to death in a way, or boring anybody with it, is suddenly I was interested. I was interested in my own life the way I used to be interested in it when I was a kid, when tomorrow was exceptional. And for me, every day was exceptional when I actually realized – now, I wasn't telling people what I wanted to do. Because half of me was going: who's gonna believe this, especially my dad?

Tim Ferriss: How old were you at the time?

Kevin Costner: Let's say I'm probably 20, 21. In my mind, I thought how come at 21 I don't know what I want to be? There was this kind of thing; I thought I was actually getting old. I don't know what I want to do. Seemed like everybody else did. I didn't have anybody to tell me to relax, just keep moving; you're doing fine. A lot of what I got was: So what are you going to do?

And so just like the rat in the maze going after the cheese, I just kept going to class. I was going to graduate with a degree that I didn't care. I did care about the acting. And I started to fall in love with something. Didn't know if I was going to be able to make a living at it, but I finally got rid of the whispers in my head, which were what are you going to be? And I'd say it's none of your business; I'm going to be what I want to be.

I finally shook loose of, I guess, my parents. This is not a session about therapy but I finally got rid of the whispers. It didn't matter. I somehow figured out, if I didn't make myself happy, I would never be happy. If I didn't pursue what was whispering to me, I would absolutely be a failure. I would absolutely be an unhappy person.

And believe me, when I could articulate that – which maybe many people could; I couldn't – but when I articulated that I didn't care anymore about what anybody thought about what I did except me, all the weight of the world came off my shoulders, and everything became possible. It shifted to everybody else that they were now worried. Now they're worried. But everything for me, it shifted to a place where I felt free.

Tim Ferriss: How did *The Chill* come to be, that experience?

Kevin Costner: That was the one part that Lawrence Kasden could cast without permission from the studio. He had already done *Body Heat* and people recognized that he was a special talent. A casting director named Wally Nassida, who was a very tough casting director, a no nonsense kind of person who really actually helped her directors.

She would offer up people. She put me up in front of him saying that I was somebody she thought was very good. And I was lucky enough to get *The Big Chill*. I knew immediately that my life would change as a result of that movie. A lot of people talk about you're cut out; were you disappointed? I guess I had a small measure of disappointment but not anything like what I think people thought I should have.

I realized the moment that I was hired that somehow I was on my own yellow brick road. And appearing in that movie wasn't nearly as important as being in it. I knew I was in it. The people I was around knew I was in it. I had suddenly found my footing that had probably taken from the point of that accounting class, probably had taken six years, seven years.

People talk about entrepreneurs and the idea of being an entrepreneur is being willing to do a job that nobody else wants to do, to be able to live the rest of your life doing whatever you want to do. And so how I can correlate that a little bit would be to try to be an actor when there's no guarantee that it's ever going to work for you, but that you're willing to really work at it for a long time when all the other responsibilities that follow you being married, trying to provide, but still not giving up on your dream. It sustained me. I was lucky.

I was able to make it and when I got to that point, I was a better actor. Even though I made a check and everybody had been really happy, I wouldn't have had the foundation. I had to reeducate myself, and I love the idea of educating myself.

Tim Ferriss: Over the course of six or seven years before you were cast for *The Chill*, what did you say to yourself to keep yourself going?

Kevin Costner: It's hard because if you want to be practical, and you need to be. It's very difficult to be around people who don't see themselves clearly. And when your parents tell you you're the fastest little runner, you believe that. But by the time you get to the sixth grade, there are people blowing by you and your chances of being in the Olympics, they're not good. And so if somebody says I'm going to make it anyway; okay.

That's a hard person to be around, a little bit. In the world of acting, you have to think where you would fit. So I was looking out at the landscape; obviously I was going to class at night, doing everything I would do, hating everybody I saw, or being around other actors who I realized hated everybody on television that had parts.

There's bitterness among actors who don't have jobs looking out there at the people who do. And I didn't really feel that but I could understand that. As I was moving along, there was a moment in

time where I actually thought I wasn't going to make it. I did. And one thing I did once I decided that I'd become an actor, is I didn't want to put a clock on things.

Tim Ferriss: I was going to ask you that.

Kevin Costner: So I didn't. But I was also a practical person. I mean, look at me. I know what time it is. And I'm starting to think, you know what? The people I'm supposedly going to be going up against are getting more parts. I was going up against Sean Penn, and Nicholas Cage, and Ken Wahl, and Mel Gibson, and Richard Gere. And you can think of all the people who were already on the landscape when I actually decided that I would act. So they not only had those credits going for them before I started, they had 20 films behind them.

So this was a category that I was in. And so if I would go up for a part, there would be four or five of these names being thrown around, and they would just work their way right down and so my chances of getting those parts weren't very good. But somewhere around the line, they started using me in certain movies, going, "Well, if you want too much money, we're going to go with this unknown guy." Well, who's this unknown guy? Kevin. I was a bit of a stalking horse for some people to either take less money or we're going to give this good part away.

Tim Ferriss: By stalking horse, you mean like a bargaining chip or a plan B?

Kevin Costner: We'll go with this unknown. They continued to go with the knowns. So I actually thought, you know what, I'm not going to be able to jump over these guys. Timothy Hutton; you can just go right down the list. Then *The Big Chill* happened for me.

I was working as a stage manager at Raleigh Studios for three years. I would be taking cable and working late, late at night and I didn't tell a lot of people that I acted because nobody wants to be around a pining actor. So I just didn't say it. But what happened was, all of a sudden when I did start to emerge, *Big Chill* moved to *Fandango*, moved to *American Fliers*, moved to *Silverado*. Suddenly, it seemed like it was happening very fast for some people. It was like, what? Where did this come from?

And then when I decided I would direct, which was about two pictures later, people thought: wow, he's moving really, really fast. What they didn't know was I had been dreaming this moment for six, seven years before that. Then when it was starting to happen, I

had already been planning for these things. So what was fast for other people wasn't fast for me.

Tim Ferriss: That makes perfect sense. You hit a certain escape velocity, in a scene, or to use maybe a different metaphor, you'd been cranking and cranking and got to the top of the roller coaster.

But you'd been thinking of that descent all along. I've heard you say the big struggle in acting is staying loose. If you were to have the opportunity to go back to yourself, say, at the *Silverado* point, what advice, acting or otherwise, would you have given yourself?

Kevin Costner: I'll tell you, I would give myself almost the same advice as I did which was I'm going to try to hold out for the good movies. I'm not just going to try to go to movie after movie. You know, maybe what I should have given myself is be really ready to do the sequels. At 30, I would have said just be prepared to do *Bull Durham 2*, *Tin Cup 2*, *Body Guard 2*. Get in the mode of making these movies later on.

Tim Ferriss: What are some of the scenes that have scared you the most? And I've heard you talk about after you've read a script and sort of picked up on the secret, something you can't wait to hopefully portray or share with an audience, or tell in a certain way, what are some of the scenes that come to mind that you're most scared of in any film that comes to mind?

Kevin Costner: Number one, there's got to be a scene in there that you really want to do; you think you can do, that you really, really want to say. That you want to be known – I remember seeing Spencer Tracy in *Inherit the Wind*, and watching Gregory Peck in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I thought to myself, I mean I loved McQueen, and I loved Newman and they were minimalists.

And so I understood how to work with a lot of economy. I knew I would do westerns, but I was never afraid of language, either. I would read a lot about McQueen and it was always ripping lines out; didn't have any elongated anything. It was just not going to happen. Me, I wanted to have the *Inherit the Wind* speeches. I wanted to have those things. And I've been able to have four or five of those in my career. I had one with *Black or White*, in the courtroom.

The problem is when you see them written so well, you know, the thing in *Bull Durham*, I believe; is that you realize you're also the

person who can mess them up. You're also the person who can take a big whiff at something that was so great. And so I usually know when I'm onto something, which is when I'm a little bit afraid of it. I go: wow, I could mess this up.

And I've put myself there a lot of times in my life. And I've often asked myself, why have I tried so hard to be in a place where I could fail so badly in front of so many? I've gone to bed at night knowing the next day, I have to deliver. And if I don't, everybody else is going to know.

Tim Ferriss: I remember calling a commencement speech that was given by one of my favorite writers, Neil Gaiman, an amazing fiction writer. It's called *Make Good Art*. At one point he says when you feel like – and I'm paraphrasing here – you're walking down the street naked, extremely uncomfortable about what you're going to say, you might just be getting it right. When you're tackling a scene like the "I believe," say in *Bull Durham*, how do you prepare for that? How do you practice beforehand?

Kevin Costner: I never thought I did that scene as well as it could have been done. The writing was so great. I just did the best I could. And I had a great director in Ron Shelton who launched me in another movie called *Tin Cup*. But how do you prepare? Let's take the scene in *JFK*, which was about 11 pages long. It was a really, intense thing. I started on that probably a month and a half, two months before we ever started filming. I'm really slow.

I can memorize, I think, as well as anybody but I can't perform with memory. I have to perform when I actually own the words and I can do them in any state. So to do that, I know that I have to get off book, which is a term for I don't need the script anymore. I do that before every movie. I'm off book.

I don't trust myself to learn lines the week of, the night of; I just don't do it. It's kind of anal. But for me, it makes me more prepared to step through what I call a window of opportunity if one presents itself on the set that day. A lot of people, they go: no, I'll just wing it. I like being fresh, I like being open to the spontaneity. I would never trust the work that I do to that, and I couldn't do that to a movie I was working on. I wouldn't trust myself. I think going in really prepared makes me really confident to do anything that happens that day. I'm not just stuck there. I'm just prepared to do that.

Tim Ferriss: It seems also that your familiarity with the material allows you to make some very intelligent suggestions. You brought up *JFK*, the “let us suppose.” Maybe you could explain the conversation with Oliver Stone.

Kevin Costner: Oliver comes under a lot of scrutiny. He really has a really active mind, and is really a patriot in his own way after a truth. And he’s willing to go at it very, very hard. People have questioned him on the directions he goes down, the rabbit holes he’s willing to go down, and what gets said and who said it. I knew I was going to be the voice of all of this. And as I was going through that script, I wanted to serve Oliver. But I also wanted to serve myself a little bit, too.

Which was to make sure that I wasn’t so far out on a limb saying explicitly what Oliver is saying. And when I came to certain things that I was unsure about, and some other people questioned it a little bit, I said, “Oliver, I’m not comfortable saying this. I would be more comfortable saying let us supposed, as opposed to this actually happened.”

Because the “let us suppose” is framing things for people to see. Because if there’s no actual eye witness there, you go, let us suppose this happened. And Oliver didn’t fight that at all, to his credit. He said, “That’s fine; let’s just paint this picture because that’s the picture I believe is there.” Because you could turn and say now let us suppose that didn’t happen, and you go down that road. And I thought it was a fair depiction and I was proud of Oliver. Instead of fighting it: no, we’re going to say that’s fact; it is fact because this guy said it was. And he said let’s just think about that a little bit. It was a good collaboration.

Tim Ferriss: You mentioned something about Oliver: I hope he doesn’t burn himself up. What did you mean?

Kevin Costner: I said what?

Tim Ferriss: I hope he doesn’t burn himself up. I hope he hears this.

Kevin Costner: I don’t know where I said that, but that’s just one friend to another, one colleague to another.

And listen, we all burn pretty hot and bright and go pretty hard. I don’t need to let people know anything more than that, other than this was a guy who was good to me and I know he plays hard, and I know e works really hard. I want to see him have as long a life as

he possibly can, and do the work that means a lot to him. So I'll just kind of let it go at that.

Tim Ferriss: The reason I ask is, quite frankly, because I think it's out of personal interest. You've had a very long career and you've lasted. I feel like I burn the candle at both ends quite often, particularly when I get immersed in a creative project and can't kind of pull back to 30,000 feet. Do you feel like you've ever been at risk of burning out? For instance, *Water World*, massively long shoot. How have you contended with that, if you've had to?

Kevin Costner: I was also going through a divorce, which was something I didn't see happening to me from a conservative point of view, how you're raised that you think this is how it's going to be the rest of your life. You kind of know even before that, that it wasn't really working that way. But all the planets lined up with this incredibly long movie, a very tough thing. I actually went through that entire movie divorced; separated and then divorced before the movie started. People don't know that.

They happen to think that somewhere halfway through, that that happened. It didn't. I was going to work every day feeling a bit like a failure. To me, I just go back. You put your head down and you keep working, and you keep doing the very best you can. You don't let the people around you know that your heart's on the ground. My life is so much more than acting.

I stop sometimes because I just want to stop, not because I have to stop. I remember in college when we'd do black beauties, you'd just be up all night. Somebody needs to come in and stop me, you know what I mean? And I didn't have that. I have my own governor, and I have my own energy level which might not be the same as somebody else who thinks you need to slow down. I kind of know when I need to.

Tim Ferriss: Got it; you have some type of limiter.

Kevin Costner: Yeah, and I have other interests that actually almost force that. I have my own seasons as a man, so to speak. I've got to go hunting, I've got to go fishing, I've got to be back for little league. I have these things that are important to me and important to my family.

Tim Ferriss: This is a bit of a non sequitur but I'm so curious because I've spent just a little bit of time in Aspen doing some work with the Aspen Institute.

I bumped into somebody at one point, and they're like: you know what? This could be totally false but they're like: I walked into this bar in Aspen, and Kevin Costner was bartending. Have you ever bartended at a bar in Aspen or even as like just like...?

Kevin Costner: I have friends that bartend. Maybe I jumped back to help them for a second. I don't know how to make change. My nightmare is when something costs \$8.00 or something and I give them a certain amount of money and the guy goes, can you give me ten more cents or something like that?

Tim Ferriss: That's like PTSD after accounting class.

Kevin Costner: Yeah. It's like; please don't do that to me. My temples start to pound. It's like, hey man, why are you asking for more money? Because you want to make life easier on me? You're not; you're humiliating me. Stop. I literally kind of throw the money down on the counter and just walk out. It's like some reflex, like don't have me do math at the chalkboard.

I had this little creep, I was in fourth grade, and you know how sometimes the teachers will tell you: hey, the fifth grade teacher needs you to take this note over. Well, if I look back at my life, I've got a very, very sound life. But if I really look back at it, I do have moments where I have real problems as a result of certain things. You just don't realize it. So I go to the fifth grade class, and there was this little prick, his name was Mr. Chapman. He was short, and he had a flat top like a Marine, and he wore a bowtie.

Tim Ferriss: Sounds like a handful already.

Kevin Costner: A prick already, right? And so I walked in, and I brought the paper and he goes, "What are you doing in class?" And I go, "Oh, we're doing clay or something." And he goes, "Well, we're doing math, here." We're doing whatever kind of math. I go, "That's really great." He goes, "Why don't you show us the math you know how to do?"

Tim Ferriss: Oh, God.

Kevin Costner: Can you believe that, this guy would do this to a fourth grader? And he would have me try to do their math. And he laughed at me.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, what a mess.

Kevin Costner: And the kids laughed. And I remember the teacher told me another time: can you take this over to Mr. Chapman? I go, no. and she said: look, you just have to do this for whatever reason. And I wasn't able to say no to her, either. Again, maybe that's that conservative background. Into that class I went. Chapman, this little prick, did the same thing again. He humiliated me and he allowed his fifth graders to laugh at me.

And believe it or not, I could never go to the chalkboard again without that fear of being laughed at. So the truth was, I could go to the gas station now and give the guy the money, and he goes, "Give me an extra dime and I'll make this even on you." That's the chalkboard to me. It's the chalkboard.

That guy was cruel. That guy shouldn't have been a teacher. Somebody should have jerked him on his ass and said you don't talk to anybody like that; you don't humiliate anybody, let alone a kid lower grade coming into your class just to give you something. There was something really wrong with him. I probably conjured that story up for the first time probably about ten years ago, telling somebody about it.

Because I always wondered why everything would go into a fog with me when I would go up to the chalkboard. I couldn't follow the directions that anybody was saying to me. They go: this is really simple. It wasn't simple to me. Why? I couldn't hear it; my brain was pounding.

Tim Ferriss: That's horrible. That sounds very sadistic.

Kevin Costner: It's wrong. I've got this life where I have this fame, worldwide fame. Somebody who's listening is probably going: Jesus Christ, listen, we're all bruised in this world.

Not the kind of abusive home, thank God. Somebody says: hey, gee Kev, that's pretty mild; I would agree with you. But nevertheless, you realize if you take that and see how it affected me, and then maybe add on heaps of the stuff that happens to other children, my God, we really can ruin people.

Tim Ferriss: And it could just be an off the cuff remark. I remember my mom, for instance, at one point was in a music class, I think it was, singing. And the teacher said: yeah, you should just stop singing. It was off the cuff remark. Maybe that teacher was just having a bad day, whatever it was. But my mom has carried that throughout her entire life, that she can't sing or she shouldn't sing. I had a similar

experience with a math teacher in high school. Just was constantly kind of heckled or needled in this class.

So my choice in college was partly determined by where I wouldn't have a math requirement.

Kevin Costner: Right. And so we understand how we affect people. That's followed me with whatever fame I carry around the world. That I know I come into contact with people, and there's a moment I can have an impact on them. It's very with me.

Tim Ferriss: How have you learned to contend with, and this is just in my small, startup world space, but I'll have people who come up to me. I'm at a urinal and they'll come up and want to pitch a startup behind my head at a urinal. How have you learned to contend, because it must be difficult for you to go out to a lot of public places, I would imagine.

Kevin Costner: I go anywhere I want because I never wanted my kids to be limited: oh, Daddy can't go here because Daddy's too famous. I'll tell you where I can't go is to the bars because there's alcohol. When there's alcohol, people get loose.

They get too free. They say things under the guise of it or whatever. And a girl will say something. So that's not a good place for me, to be honest. I'm not a drinker so it's not really a loss for me. The other place that's more difficult is Disneyland where people think you're part of the ride. But I go to both places, regardless, because if my friends are there, I'll go. And I'll make sure that my kids go to Disneyland. I am determined to not let fame affect them.

Tim Ferriss: You mentioned you have many different interests. One I'd like to touch on before we talk about some more recent projects is directing. And specifically *Dances With Wolves*, which is one of my favorite movies of all time, as a side note. But could you describe how that got started and your interactions with Michael Blake?

Kevin Costner: You mean the story of it being written, the whole thing?

Tim Ferriss: Specifically what I was thinking of was how *Dances With Wolves* started up on a wall.

Kevin Costner: Oh, yeah. Michael; and we've lost Michael. Michael passed away. Michael was a real child of the '60s. He was on the newspaper

staff. He was against the establishment. He was with Jane Fonda. Just imagine everything; Berkeley, the long hair, the whole thing. But Michael was really after the truth. But then Michael got to a point as we moved into the '70s where he wanted to write screenplays, wanted to write books.

He did write books, but he really wanted to write screenplays and that's how we met, downtown off the LA River near where the Coors plant used to be down there. There was this chemical plant, and that's where Michael slept. We met and there was an acting group that none of us had to pay any money, and it was a very eclectic group of people.

A lot of rock and roll people, screenwriters, people who wanted to direct, people who wanted to produce. So we could all do what we wanted to do every night, which was act, which was hear our own writing. At one point, *The Big Chill* thing happened and I started to emerge so I was the one person who had started to emerge, and things started to go well for me. And so I was quickly dragging along my friends, if I could, to get them interviews. Michael was one of those. I got Michael eight or nine interviews that I could never get when I was struggling.

And every one of them went south. Every one of them, I'd get a phone call: Michael insulted us, Michael told us we don't know what we're doing; you don't know good writing. So those calls were getting very difficult for me because I was trying to help him. And pretty soon, some of the people I was sending him to were actually as good a friend to me as he was. And so now he insulted them.

So I was losing patience with him, and losing patience with him really putting down Hollywood and everything. Somewhere along the line – I'm shortchanging this because I don't want to bore the audience but he really crossed the line with me and said something about some people, and about this and I kind of was letting him know: Mike, maybe the writing's not good enough right now. Then he said one more thing and the next thing I knew, I had my hands on him. I had him up against the wall. He had really crossed a line with me.

And basically I said, "Quit pretending you want to be in Hollywood because everything you're writing is ending on page 120," which is code for screenplay, about 120 pages. I said, "Why don't you start writing things that mean something, like a short story or a long story; something that ends on 88 or 188, or 888.

And quit trying to write these.” I literally had him off the ground, and there were scripts under his feet and I kicked them and they went dramatically sliding like a deck of cards out there.

And now I let him down. I said, “Why don't you quit pretending this thing you want to be and that you actually hate?” I thought really our relationship was over there because I had put my hands on him, and that would be hard for me to come back from. But you know, Michael, three weeks later says to me – typical writer – he goes, “I don't have any place to live.” I said, “Alright, come live at our house.” And every night I would come home and he goes, “I'm writing something, do you want to hear it?” And I go, “No.” Every night he goes, “Can I read what I wrote?” I said no.

Tim Ferriss: Why did you say no?

Kevin Costner: Because I was sick of him.

Tim Ferriss: Fair enough.

Kevin Costner: I'd almost beat him up. And so now I'm having to look at him have cereal in my house and everything in the morning and at night. I've got one spare bedroom of a house I've bought, and my wife's even beginning to wonder about him. And she's saying to me after two months, “Hey, he's down there reading to our kids in his underwear.” My kids are like 5 years old. They can't understand the story he's reading. And I said, “Michael's fine, there's nothing going on down there.”

She goes, “Well, I'm not so fine with it after about two months.” So I say, “Mike, you're gonna have to go,” finally. So Mike goes and spends a little bit of time at another one of my friend's for about three weeks, and now he's done. He gives me this manuscript. He goes, “I hope you read it.” I go, “I'm not sure I'm going to.” I was pissed at this guy. But I'm also a softie; I let him live with me. I just didn't want anything to do with him for awhile; he bugged me so much.

And so he split. He went down to Bisbee, Arizona and worked at a Chinese restaurant washing dishes at night and then killing raccoons during the day at this ranch. He would call me up and say, “Did you read my thing?” I said no, no. This went on for about three weeks, and then I get a letter and he goes: I'm cold. And I said, ugh. And so I sent him down a sleeping bag, a Coleman stove; I sent him some stuff. He goes, “Did you read my

thing?" I go, "No." One night I pick it up, about four months later, five months later.

And I start reading, and I read it all that night. It was *Dances With Wolves*. I was really proud of him. I was really, really proud of him. Because when you live in this town, there are people always giving you things, giving you their last, best work: this is my best work. And so you're honored to be able to read somebody's thing, but you're also in the position of having to turn around and tell them if you like it or not. And that can really take the air out of somebody. So unbelievably, Michael, without.. I was right not to try to listen to any of his stuff.

I didn't want to edit any of his stuff. I didn't want to influence it. I wanted him to go until he was done. And it just took me six months to read it. It was *Dances*, and I was really proud. I called him up and I said, "I'm going to make this into a movie. I don't know how I'm going to do it." Because I didn't have that kind of money. But I said, "I'm going to do it and you're going to write the screenplay. I'm going to pay you more than you've ever been paid."

I'm going to find out what the Writer's Guild is, instead of working for \$3,000.00 for all these goombahs in town writing low budget films; I said, "I'm going to find out." It was, I don't know, \$27,000.00 and I went and figured out how to get \$27,000.00 and paid Michael. I said, "Let's do this." We made that movie about two years later, and Mike won the Oscar.

Tim Ferriss: It's such a fine movie. Was it originally titled *Dances With Wolves*?

Kevin Costner: Yes.

Tim Ferriss: It was, right from the beginning?

Kevin Costner: Yeah.

Tim Ferriss: Did he give it to you basically in novel form?

Kevin Costner: Yes, it was all written out in manuscript. It was about as thick as a phone book. But when you mashed it down, it was I don't know, 200 pages; I'm not sure.

Tim Ferriss: How did you end up directing that movie? Was that your intention?

Kevin Costner: I actually went out to three really important directors, and I'm not going to use their names. I know that would be interesting but they were top of the heap guys. And all of them had things that they wouldn't do to the movie.

Some would get rid of the opening Civil War sequence. Some thought it was just too long. Somebody thought it probably shouldn't be a white girl, that that seemed like a cliché. And I said well, it really wasn't on the frontier. People were traded; there was a lot of that going on. So once I got past them, I thought to myself, you know, I think I should direct this. Going back to earlier in our discussion when you talked about were you ever afraid, I really had a good script. I knew; I worked with Mike. He didn't have a lot of fun working with me on the script.

He said it was like having the clap because I made him rewrite himself until we got it right. Because I would look at him and I said, "Look, you're either going to write it or I'm going to do it. I think you should do it." And you know, Mike never rewrote himself after that, and he never had another produced screenplay.

Tim Ferriss: So that was his only produced screenplay?

Kevin Costner: Only produced screenplay. And I was hard. Not hard, but I knew when it was working in my mind, and when I didn't think it was working, I knew we had to fix that. And it just came back to either you're going to do it, or I'm going to do it and I said I think you'd be wise if you did it; then you'd always be able to say it's yours. And he did. That's how that happened.

Tim Ferriss: What mistakes did you make early on, directing, if any come to mind, or what lessons learned?

Kevin Costner: I thought I had to make up my own shot list every day. So I'd be working late at night after a long day of how I would do the shots. I had Dean Simler; I had this really world class cinematographer. I think I made a mistake worrying about that aspect of it.

Directing is kind of like – unless you watch a lot of porn, you don't really know how other people make love; you don't really know how other people direct.

Tim Ferriss: I was wondering where that was going.

Kevin Costner: I didn't know how other people directed. I'd only been on a few movies so I wasn't sure how I was supposed to direct. But I had my own idea. But it's like if you don't see anybody do it, how do you know if you're doing it right? Maybe you'll edit that out.

Tim Ferriss: No, it makes perfect sense.

Kevin Costner: You're kind of trying to find your own way. I actually direct sometimes with a chalkboard, and that has a lot to do with my athletic background. Sometimes when I have really big scenes, I'll pull out a chalkboard and I'll look at somebody. Because a lot of times they'll be doing what you're doing, which is they're giving me some chin boogies, like that. But what I realized is they're afraid. The actor's afraid and he's going like this.

He's me at the chalkboard when I'm in the fourth grade. He's nodding but he's not hearing me. So when I go out to do a really big, explosive take, and he's supposed to be somewhere and he's over there. And I go, "Hey, what happened? I was looking right at you." And so a long time ago, I go wait a sec, maybe he's a visual guy. Maybe basically his head's bobbing up and down because he's saying please don't look at me; please don't talk to me. So I found that that chalkboard helped a lot of people. They physically understood.

Tim Ferriss: Would you use the chalkboard to storyboard? Or what would you be doing?

Kevin Costner: No, mostly in big action sequences, where you've got to be here, you've got to be there. I wouldn't use a chalkboard in a sit around thing but I would find that when I had to communicate with a lot of people, with a lot going on...

Tim Ferriss: Got it, so almost like a football play, the Xs and the circles.

[Crosstalk]

Kevin Costner: Absolutely. I said look, this is what's going to happen. And don't forget if there's a shooting and you're over here, you're going to have to be ducking your head. I need for you to be doing that. So it's like that.

I think I compensated for how I learn with other people. There were other mistakes. When we kill the one Native American, the Pawnee, finally in the river, they're chasing him down the river. I think I wouldn't have gotten such a circle around him. I think I

would have just had them look and then pour in on him. There was a moment, though, where they were glad they caught him. I just felt it was just too perfect. I just thought there was this kind of thing where he realized he couldn't run anymore. They look, they look, and then just descend on him. So I look at that and I think that was a mistake; I shouldn't have done that.

Tim Ferriss: Such a great movie. I was really struck by it. I only saw *Dances With Wolves* for the first time a few years ago. I was becoming very interested in the Dakota Sioux and looking at a lot of Native American heritage and mythology and whatnot.

Kevin Costner: That movie was different than a lot of movies in the sense that that was a journey movie. It wasn't a plot movie. It's like how are we going to rob the bank? Well, you get your crew, you get your plan and then something starts to go wrong with your plan. You didn't know where the movie was going. And I think people were able to just go for the ride.

Tim Ferriss: Just the entire transformation of the protagonist throughout the movie. You don't need the extra kudos but it had a real impact on me for thank you for helping put that out into the world. You have so many different interests, like you mentioned. You have the long standing interest in music. You have obviously the acting and the directing, very manually literate; you know how to work with your hands, framing houses, etc. And I'm holding here in my left hand, this is *The Explorer's Guild*.

This is a book after my own heart, in a way. This is a thick tome. But why writing, and why *The Explorer's Guild*? How did this come together?

Kevin Costner: It wasn't on my agenda to do this. As I go through my life, I'm always really open to meeting people, and [inaudible] was a writer, and a couple of his friends wanted to meet me. I was told that he was very, very talented but that he wanted to meet me at some point and talk about some story ideas that they might have had. I a level of trust in the person who told me they were good, and that kind of thing. My mind is always open to things.

So we met, not with the idea that we were going to write a book. I was going to listen to what they had to say. And that person was Jon Baird, and we met at the Four Seasons. Actually, Jon's with us. You were nice enough to invite him in and let him be part of this.

Tim Ferriss: Of course.

Jon: Hey guys, thanks for letting me crash. Although you know, I think I can be a more effective salesperson sometimes when I'm out of the picture. Thanks for having me anyway.

Tim Ferriss: Of course. I'm just so curious how something of this magnitude manifests. I'd just love to hear you expand on what happened at the meeting and then what followed after that.

Kevin Costner: He came in and kind of had this idea... I couldn't get my arms around really what he was saying.

Jon: [Inaudible] a lot of that.

Kevin Costner: Yeah. Anybody has it hard sometimes on a cold meeting to get traction, and Jon was having trouble getting traction. But it turns out in his favor, the story he was talking about was pretty elaborate. So it was like how do you do that really, really quickly? And I couldn't get my arms around it. I said, "Why don't we talk the following week? You come up to Santa Barbara. We won't be in the Four Seasons; we'll be in my backyard."

I have to admit that the story was still a little bit unclear. I think Jon was still working it.

Jon: Strike two.

Kevin Costner: But I had a bigger feeling about who this guy was. I thought, I want to be around this guy, Jon Baird.

Tim Ferriss: What gave you that feeling?

Kevin Costner: I can't always articulate it but you feel you're around somebody who has a different voice, thinks in a different way, and has a wicked wit. I believed the story was there underneath the stuttering.

Tim Ferriss: So Jon, maybe you can tell because obviously there are two sides to this story. It's kind of like the birthing of a book. Why did you want to meet Kevin?

Kevin Costner: I'd like to tell you that we had some really well worked out plan and it was just a question of communicating it to him.

I think we had a general idea of a secret society of explorers. We thought this would be a gateway to just innumerable stories. We

were presenting it as a kind of throwback to that classic, epic adventure storytelling. And given an opportunity to meet with someone of Kevin's stature, of course we wouldn't say no. but the fact is, we discovered is he's sort of a fan of those same, old classic stories that we actually love. So things kind of took off from there. We both found that we love that big, canvas storytelling.

We love the idea of secret parts in the world, and hidden histories, and the collaboration took off from there. He is not mischaracterizing the first couple of meetings at all. It had less, I think, to do with being star struck and more just this is a very anti Hollywood story. We didn't have an end game; we didn't have even a format that we liked.

I had a couple of sketches, a couple of storylines, a couple of ideas.

Tim Ferriss: It wasn't Aliens meets Diehard.

Jon: [Inaudible]. My pitching today is still terrible. And I don't know if that was part of maybe the allure for Kevin because this wasn't something that was presented to him fully formed, by any stretch. It just had some elements and some things I think he may have sparked to. It was always going to be something that we formed together.

Tim Ferriss: When did you decide to actually pull the trigger and work together on this?

Kevin Costner: I think it was that second time, or did you come up one more time?

Jon: Again to Kevin's credit, and we were recording in a place right now and it was maybe five feet from where we're talking. And he said, "You know what, I still really don't get this but let's do it."

you've probably heard him as he's recreating some of his biggest successes, and people always see him when the rock is rolling down the hill; that's the part they see. What they don't see is all the pushing – and he's pushing it downhill, no mistake. But I think by the time people see him, you kind of think he's got it pretty easy. I've been witness myself – this is eight or nine years ago when we met. There were all sorts of misfires, all sorts of trying some things and scrambling back, reformulating, trying it again before about four years ago, I came to him saying let's just do this as the book.

Tim Ferriss: So initially was the plan to do a whole collection of multi media properties? Or was it intended to be a film, initially, and then decided to be in this iteration the book?

Jon: It was always a book; that's my background, in sort of minor books. But we think the story, the structure of it is so expansive it lends itself – and I think 360 degree media was a popular thing at the time, and perhaps still is.

And we saw a lot of opportunity there. I think we tried animating it for what could have been, in these very small chunks, Kevin put some of our smaller animations together and thought maybe we can go from a web series, or maybe this is an animated TV series or something like that.

Kevin Costner: It was really cool. We did animate it. Once we started working, I just picked up the momentum of loving it. We talked earlier about some of my films that I haven't done the sequel to. I saw this as something that had innumerable stories. It was big storytelling; it was big canvas. So I thought to myself, gravity is going to just fall; everything's going to come right to our door.

This is what people are looking for. So we did this, and I think Jon is alluding to the fact that no, people didn't. They wanted to know who the boy in it was. Could he have a magic watch and make him fly? Because our boy doesn't have a magic watch or fly.

Jon: Is he one [inaudible] lesbians.

Kevin Costner: Yeah, if we could get a lesbian in here, too.

Tim Ferriss: Are these Hollywood people giving this feedback?

Kevin Costner: Yeah. Jon heard those versions, and I heard the magic watch version. Which is; we can put them in because they exist in the world, but maybe not in our world in this particular moment. So we think our boy is better off having a hole in his head than having a watch in his pocket.

Tim Ferriss: A magic watch and lesbians.

Kevin Costner: So what happened was it didn't work. Again, that was probably five years ago. And we stopped. I think Jon felt that I was humiliated by all the nos by executives; I wasn't. But I appreciated him. That's the only time I ever saw Jon get really mad. He goes, "These people shouldn't be saying no to you." And I needed to

look at him and think, well, who am I, Jon, other than a storyteller? They can say no. it is what it is. But I loved his defensiveness for me. But we stayed the course.

We went off and wrote a western together. And Jon came back and said, "I'm going to write the book because that's my background." And I said, "Go man, go."

Tim Ferriss: S this is a beautiful book. I mentioned before we started recording that I wanted to be a comic book penciller for a very long time. Aesthetically, how did you think about putting together the book? It's clearly very, very consciously decided. The paper stock, the tint of the paper, it's just a physically beautiful output.

Jon: I have a long background because as you might know, writing books is not a great way to make a living. Although I had a couple, I had to support myself doing other things I was always an art director and a designer, and wanted to be an illustrator. I had a lot of experience in not just design, but right through press. I got very into it because I really liked the ins and outs of paper stock, and printing techniques, and finishing techniques.

So the two things I had done before this, although they didn't find much of an audience, they were same thing; very carefully done. Each page was well thought through and this is always going to have a graphic element in it. Before we leave the idea of Kevin saying go, man go on the book, it's true that that was the initial brief. We had kind of ping ponged some story for many years and then when it came format-wise, he was doing his things and I was going to run off with the book.

It started that way but the thing I really always need to say, because I think people will make certain assumptions when they see there's a celebrity, someone of Kevin's stature and someone who's me, I think the thought is probably that here's a guy who's probably reading it along with the rest of America and wanted to just sort of show up when it's on press to make sure his name is in the right place. He may have started in more of a backseat role on it because this was a book and not a film, and because it was something I brought to him.

But as pages started coming in, it was very natural for him just to slip into it as he has on any other project. And it started in a general way kind of shaping it, like we would bounce material. But then he's bringing characters and storylines and dialogue. He is page by page with me, always making time, knocking these out

getting through it. And at a certain point, it was no longer something that was mine that he was giving input on; this was ours and we were collaborating on it.

Tim Ferriss: What would a jam session look like? In other words, to organize those inputs and try to synthesize it? This something I've always been fascinated by because I've never had a writing partner, which I quite frankly envy a lot. I've come to know a lot of comedy writers who work in film, and they're almost always at least a pair. In this particular case, how did you guys collaborate and sort of capture and decide then what would be drafted?

Jon: There's a third component, too, as you kind of alluded to. I didn't illustrate this thing myself; it's way beyond my talents and certainly my endurance.

There's a guy named Rick Ross who is the major part of making this book what it is. We joke, like we'd like to characterize it for you as a sort of extended keyboard that we're both kind of jamming on in our berets. My process is very, very solitary, generally. I think probably a lot of people who hack their way through especially this kind of writing, it starts in just a room, alone. There were long stretches like that. But the rewarding part for me was getting to bring product up here.

Kevin, I think, has a little more of a kinetic type of property and casualty. I think it's the actor, directorial sort of mindset where he envisions sort of living in these people from character to character. He knows how certain people would act and how certain people wouldn't. He knows where he wants things to lead and how best to get there.

Where I might be following up on his ideas from last time and bringing them up in a certain form, he would kind of springboard off of that. And then it was kind of following him around and burning through notebooks while he just goes. It was very different from what I am used to doing. It was sometimes very hard to keep up.

Tim Ferriss: Did you capture that flow of ideas in, say, single Word documents, on a board, on paper? How did you capture and then process?

Jon: Because something like this, there are just story lines on story lines and wheels within wheels. Everyone once in awhile even just for me, I need to whiteboard it. He always sort of takes shots at me for being sort of an egghead but he's always very indulgent; no, I'll go

with this, I'll go with this. And I'll bring up some sort of chart or something that we'll go through. Mostly it's sort of theater of his mind. I can kind of be there, sort of rolling with it and trying to get what I need out of it and give and take some of that.

[ But mostly it's just really conversations.

Kevin Costner: There would be a level of point by point things sometimes. I would have to write down everything I'm thinking about what I was actually thinking about, and that would go to him. And then sometimes out of that, when we've come up, then we would really begin to rift. It's made up of five books. People call them five chapters; we call them five books. We would advance down the line, even though we were in book two sometimes we'd be dealing with what was going to happen in four and five and actually then circle back to something else. So it was like that. Sometimes it's written down; sometimes it's on my feet.

Tim Ferriss: What do you mean by that? Oh, I got it; improvised.

Kevin Costner: Not improvised.

Tim Ferriss: Not improvised; I apologize.

Kevin Costner: Not improvising but trying to break it down. It's Jon's voice, absolutely, and I think it's really appropriate when you talk about the book; it was really important that Jon's name stand alone up top, there.

That was very important to me. I had a lot to do with the cover, versus what was on it, versus what it is, what people wanted. Rick Ross and I, we always wanted to be a part of something that could stand the test of time when you talk about these books; Kipling, Jules Verne, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, Conrad. The kind of books that have that heft, that sit up on the shelf. That's what we wanted. Now, whether we got there or not is nearly as important as what it was we wanted to do.

I liked the idea of taking something on off the shelf that has the heft of this; actually having to blow the dust off it. And that's what this book is. This book is almost an heirloom for me. A book that who reads this goes: I'm going to pass this down to my little brother, my little sister. I'm going to get this book for them. Because where are these books?

We're looking in our last century and the century before for the classics. Who's writing them for us now? That's what we wanted; that was our love of it. And so I brought, I guess, the love of that to the characters that I liked in this and where we wanted to go with them. But only Jon writes in this specific way. I can't write the way he writes. I can see my stories in there but I can't see them as beautifully as how Jon has written them.

Tim Ferriss: Who is the target audience? Who is your ideal reader or type of reader? Who would like this book? What type of person, what type of reader?

Jon: You know, I think we're not always the best equipped – I'm sure the marketing gang at Simon & Shuster, at Atrium Books who have been really excellent partners, too, might have a really good spiel for you on the demo for this.

Tim Ferriss: But when you were writing it, who was in your mind?

Jon: I think that's exactly it. I think like anything, and especially when you're talking about four years of just – there's not going to be any feedback from the world while you're doing it. You really have to be doing it to please yourself. I think one of the things that set me loose most was Kevin saying ultimately we're not going to judge the success of this by units sold or where it goes in the world, if it makes a big movie or not. Don't worry about the movie; don't worry about all that stuff. Worry about doing something that's meaningful to us.

Like he said, that can sort of sit on the shelf. This is a big, big statement and I don't necessarily say we delivered on it but the aspiration was always sit on a shelf with Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson, Conrad, and Kipling; try to hold a place up there. And if we feel like we're at least trying for that, and we feel like we're being honest to the ideas that we have and true to that, we're going to reach maybe not everybody but the people we do reach, those 10 percenters who feel it, who feel like this was really written for me, I've been waiting for this and it hasn't been in the market; that's going to be our success.

Kevin Costner: You can quantify, you can actually put an age: okay, a 12-year-old, a 12-year-old who really wants to get with it, who loves reading. But 6-year-olds are going to become 12-year-olds. So when we were also doing the book, there was a notion of can we simplify the language? I don't want to use the word dumb it down but I

don't know how else to explain it; what do you mean, simplify it? This is how we want to talk. Because when you think something's going to travel through time, people are going to find it. And they find it when it's appropriate.

Look, when you make *Bull Durham* or you make *Tin Cup*, there's an R to it. So the 12-year-old can't see it. But he's going to see it. So there's something about trying to be true. The problem we deal with, I think in the world artistically, is that everybody's got this little meter on their shoulder, something like go faster, or a pace; it's going too slow. When we decided that we were going to make a book, we weren't going to have anybody tell us how to do it, other than how we felt about it.

And we felt that this could become perhaps a classic in our own time.

Tim Ferriss: So this is not maybe directly related but for you, Kevin, after all of the accolades, the awards, the box office success, how do you continue to develop yourself as an artist? How do you think about that?

Kevin Costner: I just move towards the things that interest me. If I get really interested, if I'm not doing a movie and I'm really interested in little league, I'm going to do little league with my kids in the spring and I'll be really interested. I move towards the things and towards the people that interest me. And story usually has a bit of attachment to almost all of those things; the poetry of telling a story.

Tim Ferriss: Jon, for you, what type of fiction or non fiction writers have most influenced your thinking about storytelling?

Jon: I think we mentioned a few of the canon. When we talk about more recent comparables, just generally to kind of put this in a framework for people, go to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. But what we're really doing is drawing from the same well that those guys drew from. Not specifically but it was probably more of the [inaudible] Haggard books, the *King Solomon's Mine*, the [inaudible] mysteries. So for me, they're the *Treasure Island*, *Moby Dick*, all these classics filtered through kind of Thomas Pynchon.

You'll see that kind of layering sort of creeping into surrealism towards the end that I always dug in him. I think there's a reason that those stories of Conrad and Kipling stay evergreen. They may

be thought of now as kind of required reading but I think our idea was there is a reason why these stories still thrill us today.

And as Kev says, more metaphorically, blow a little of the dust off it and bring it to a new audience; we felt that that would succeed. There's also just parenthetically when you mentioned the graphics, that was another decision, too, of I think – because what you see when you'll open it is it's a little bit of a hybrid between a traditional novel, and not just an illustrated novel but a paneled, sort of graphic novel. I think it was a little more of a problem than we would have anticipated just with the gatekeepers of, I heard a lot of it's kind of between two chairs, was a phrase that pecked at me for awhile.

Tim Ferriss: What was it? Heads between two chairs?

Jon: This kind of lands between two chairs. The idea is we're going to put it in the graphic fiction department...

Kevin Costner: I was the first one to say, huh?

Jon: I know. There are a lot of knee jerk things. You've got to classify it one way or the other and something that's difficult to classify is usually like thanks, but no thanks.

Tim Ferriss: That's a very anachronistic element of old school publishing, right? Where they think in terms of a retail store and not a search algorithm.

Jon: Right.

Tim Ferriss: And word of mouth. It's unfortunate.

Jon: My feeling was if you put it in front of somebody, they're going to get it, or they're not. And there are people who will stumble when it's going from a straight paragraph into paneled graphics who are not going to get it. I feel like after the third or fourth time, though, the idea was always that the graphics were going to be ancillary. They weren't going to be something you could skip. The story would go right through them.

I wanted the art to be really integrated in, and in a way that you don't see in a lot of places. But I also wanted our story to have a lot of heft when it went right to the text. So yeah, it's a bit of an odd dock, and vision or foul, we heard a lot of that. And we're like,

you know what, we think when people see it, they're going to get it and that was more important.

Kevin Costner: I always remember the joy of when I'd have one of those books, *Treasure Island*, that I could see in the middle of that book that there were pictures.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, you'd see the glossy pictures.

Kevin Costner: And I wanted to get to them. I did. And I somehow knew in my heart that I wasn't supposed to just go to them. It's not like the centerfold of *Playboy*; let's just get right to it.

And you had to earn your way. Maybe this was the jock part of me but I was always like: I wish there would be more pictures. Because that always let you really imagine the duel on the beach with what those guys had Cutlasses and they were going to go, and who was going to win. There was something about that. So I kind of wanted more of that.

But the reality was when you came to those pictures, often you just stopped and looked at it. You just stopped. And here it's not that same experience. It's you can stop and enjoy but the story is going to travel through those pictures. So it's not just that you're feasting on it, although the drawing of Rick is that spectacular, I think. But really the pictures are you're still in the middle of the story

Tim Ferriss: It's a cool combo. I remember with my last book, I decided to make multi sections illustrations, photographs and I'd never done either before, really, in my previous two books. It's a huge undertaking. From a production standpoint, I can imagine it being quite challenging. When did Rick start on the illustrations? Was it after the primary text was done, or was it concurrent?

Jon: In the interest of getting it in a finite timeframe, I think after the first chapter we brought Rick in. and there's sort of an interesting story behind that, our finding Rick.

Tim Ferriss: Hey, I like interesting stories.

Jon: Have we got time?

Kevin Costner: Jon's a beautiful illustrator himself; he mentioned that, and really good. But he understood that the volume of work that was going to be here was just unbelievable; it was epic.

It's epic and I hope that people out there, however we've managed to bore them, go, "The book is better than this interview," at least on our part. I think Tim, you're doing great, but the book is really special. It's a great thing to give yourself and to give a young friend. It's a stocking stuffer, if you will. But we knew that this was going to be an amazing task to illustrate this. It probably should have been four guys. He wanted somebody to be able to draw in the vein of Windsor McKay.

Now, I don't know if you know who Windsor McKay is, and we've been to giant book signings and I always think I'm going to be blown away by the intellectuals. And usually only one of them out of 400 knows who Windsor McKay is. That always makes me happy because my problem was when Jon said we've got to get somebody who draws like Windsor McKay, if you're me, you go, "Why don't we get Windsor McKay?"

Well, Windsor McKay is dead. He was doing this in the '20s. He was really the father of this kind of work, if you will. So I said how do we find this Windsor McKay? And Jon said, "Let's get him in Craigslist." And that's what we did. He put an ad on Craigslist. He threw out that bait, knowing only a few – like the dog who can only hear a certain sound out there?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, I know; that's genius.

Kevin Costner: Only a few people are going to know who Windsor McKay is. So we knew the line out in front wasn't going to be that long. And out of that, great artists culled down to one fabulous artist. Rick happened to be in between jobs. He thought he had a month to kill, and he ended up working on this for almost three years. He did every bit of art on it, including the cover. It's really a jewel of a book.

Tim Ferriss: Those are beautiful pieces of work. I haven't yet had the chance to read it but it sort of combines a lot of elements and aspects or genres of storytelling that I find very appealing.

We were talking about the genre and the slotting, the categorization which I'm really disillusioned by, in a sense. Because for instance, you have these books, and you were talking about age earlier. There are some fantastic books out there, whether it's *The NeverEnding Story*, or Philip Pullman's dark materials I think it is, like the *Golden Compass*. That's in the young adult section, which in my industry meant oh, this is written for young adults.

And I picked up the book, and I had to look up probably 200 words, including a lot of nautical terminology. I was like: how can a 12-year-old read this? But this is great writing; it's really compelling. And I think the fact of the matter is that if you put something out there that is truthful in so much as it's what you wanted to write, that younger readers will rise to the challenge.

Kevin Costner: That's right. There's no ceiling on who's going to be able to enjoy this.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. You don't have to dumb it down. So I'm very excited to dig in.

I assume people can find this everywhere, in terms of Amazon, book stores?

Kevin Costner: I think Barnes & Nobel, Amazon.

Tim Ferriss: The usual.

Kevin Costner: I think a lot of the independent bookstores are picking it up. It's selling, and six days in we were able to jump to the New York Times Bestseller, which was kind of a surreal moment. When you have partners, you're really glad for them. I was really glad for Rick and for Jon to be able to say that one day. I do think you're going to be hearing about Jon into next century. That's what I believe and I'm really glad that you gave us a chance to talk about this book.

Tim Ferriss: Absolutely. So where can people find this online? I'm going to put all the show notes for those people listening. There will be links to everything we've discussed, including the book, obviously, in the show notes at [fourhourworkweek.com/podcast](http://fourhourworkweek.com/podcast), all spelled out.

But for those people who want to find it on social, on the web, where are the best places for them to look?

Jon: There is a Welcome to the Explorers dot com that is set up by the publisher, and that has links there to not only the places you can buy it online but also our various social media feeds. I haven't got them memorized.

Tim Ferriss: That's okay.

Kevin Costner: We created a website. What's it called?

Jon: We've got our Facebook thing, our Instagram.

Kevin Costner: What do you call our Facebook thing?

Tim Ferriss: I don't know. That's the beauty of the internet with text.

Kevin Costner: You know what it is? If you can find it out there, this is like a treasure hunt for everybody listening.

Tim Ferriss: This is like Craigslist.

Kevin Costner: If you find it, you're going to see exactly how we started. We have all our starting materials.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, you do? Very cool.

Kevin Costner: And we did our own kind of internal interviews about our own process. So it's almost as long as the book, now. You see our drawings. We do time lapse drawings.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, nice. I love seeing the behind the scenes.

Kevin Costner: So if you really want to see how this book came together, I don't even know what my own website is.

Tim Ferriss: Well, that's the beauty of the show notes. So folks, I will provide links to all of that. Kevin, do you have a few minutes to do just a handful of more sort of rapid fire questions?

Kevin Costner: Yeah. My lawyer is standing by. I have a legion of lawyers so go ahead, shoot.

Tim Ferriss: I'm getting the green flag.

Kevin Costner: Tim's eyes got big for a second, and they just normally don't do that.

Tim Ferriss: The good news is my eyes are already kind of fishbowl size so they start off big.

Kevin Costner: You keep wanting to go outside, like me on the piano. It looks fun here.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, it's gorgeous outside. So everybody take a look at the show notes. We will come back to that before we take off. Just a handful

of questions, here, Kevin. Obviously, very much appreciate the time. When you think of the word successful, who is the first person that comes to mind and why?

Kevin Costner: The first person, I think Steven Spielberg is really successful, you know? And I think Thomas Jefferson was successful. I guess I'm not leaping to the giants of today but as you drill down on that list, then you start to go to Bezos, and you start to go to Jobs, and you go to Bill Gates; really successful, really found their way. But I guess at first blush, I don't know, Spielberg. Here's a guy who's probably not so dominant in his personality who's been able to do everything he's wanted to do.

Tim Ferriss: Is there anything else about how he's led his career otherwise that you particularly admire?

Kevin Costner: I don't think Steven has limited himself. I think early on, people tried to say he can only make this kind of story. This guy is really gifted. He's a really gifted filmmaker and I think he has challenged almost all genres, he really has. From *Sugarland Express*, to *Minority Report* and these different things, besides the obvious ones that really changed the way people look at film. *Jaws* and *ET* and *Close Encounters* were giant, giant movies and I think he has really bounced around. I think he's been incredibly successful.

Tim Ferriss: A very diverse canon of work.

Kevin Costner: I do.

Tim Ferriss: Do you have any favorite documentaries?

Kevin Costner: Yeah. It was called *Coney Island*.

Tim Ferriss: *Coney Island*?

Kevin Costner: Narrated by David McCallum. It blew me away. It blew me away to finally understand that Coney Island was so much more than just roller coasters.

It was the most popular place on the earth at the turn of the century. It was bigger than Paris. It was bigger than Chicago. And it was because all the inventors were going there. They were allowed to do things. The medical profession which wouldn't allow this guy who said hey, I think I know how to keep babies alive; I can heat them in incubation. They just ran him out of town. Coney Island said, do it here. And so he did.

And it was the most popular exhibit. You could walk in and see these babies that were kept alive. Edison, all these guys were hanging around Coney Island. We think of it in terms of the warriors, like decrepit roller coasters and things falling apart. Coney Island, there were three competing parks that were all as big as Disneyland. Luna Park, Coney and it was the place to be in the world.

And so look this documentary up, *Coney Island*, narrated by David McCallum. I was blown away by it.

Tim Ferriss: When do you go to bed and wake up in the morning?

Kevin Costner: When do I go to bed?

Tim Ferriss: Mm-hmm, generally.

Kevin Costner: I don't have a regular schedule of when I go to bed but when I wake up is pretty specific. The alarm starts going off in one, two, then the dog, three people end up in bed. There's five people in bed and the dog, and now the cat coexists there, too. It's really a problem. My kids are really hot, way too hot to be around. It's like, warm, and the bed's not comfortable. Now it's just too hot and I want out.

Tim Ferriss: What time is that, usually?

Kevin Costner: That's probably around 7. We've got to be in the car at ten to 8 or I've got to sign this crummy little sheet that says why you're late. Our name is in it so much at our school. They all go to the same school.

And you know, there's tears before they get there sometimes because they're 5, 6, and 7. There are backpacks that are all over. My kids are just like me; they can't keep their shit together. It's everywhere.

Tim Ferriss: Tools and baseballs.

Kevin Costner: It's just everywhere. And when you say, "Where's your sweater?" They'll say it's in the car, which is a bullshit answer. But I hope people understand that my life is just as cluttered as theirs, probably. But my wife and I both, if I'm not making a movie, and I haven't made one since last November; just taking a year in my own way. We drive together. We did this morning. We drive them

and we drop them off. I don't know why. I look like a dorky dad in the seat, and I get out and give them their backpacks, and my wife's driving. And I don't know how that looks but it's how my life plays.

Tim Ferriss: I suppose you could choose either one of these questions. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? And/or, do you have any bad habit or bad habits that you're currently working to overcome in any way?

Kevin Costner: I wish I was more disciplined about wanting to work out because I need to. But I hate it. I hate thinking about the clothes you have to wear if you go to a gym. I hate the idea of picking up led. It makes no sense to me. I don't want to run with headphones. If I'm going to run, I want to make sure I'm watching the news. I'm not disciplined about taking care of my body. I wish I could but it's just... exercise is just a drag, man.

Tim Ferriss: I'll do some thinking on that. I might have some ideas for you. Is it true that you've done all or most of your riding, equestrian work in your movies?

Kevin Costner: Yeah, I've done most of it. I've always had stunt guys in my movies, and they have done some really, really difficult things. But because it's important for me to put the camera as close to the action as possible, I've done most of my riding.

But I have been covered by excellent stuntmen. I've had stuntmen make me look faster and make the jump look farther. But I have put myself in the middle of stampedes. I don't know why, with no reins and going. I like that part of it. I always think, who wouldn't want to go after the bad guy yourself? Why do you just automatically give that up?

I heard Roger Moore, who I think is great, but he used to say: oh no, that's too far; I don't do that. And it might have been just a step over. No, I'm not going to wrestle here. I kind of wanted that. I wanted to jump on it and save the day. Who wouldn't want to swing from rope to rope in Robin Hood? Who wouldn't want to do that? I had a stunt guy help me but whenever I can, I do it.

Tim Ferriss: Are there any particular historical figures that you identify with?

Kevin Costner: Not that I identify with but Mark Twain is someone I think about a lot.

Tim Ferriss: He's amazing.

Kevin Costner: Lincoln I think about a lot. And Jefferson; you heard me mention him. He's somebody I think a lot about. I would have liked to have met Crazy Horse. I would have liked to have met Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce. I would have liked to have known how fucked up they must have felt at the end, going, "Jesus, we're just going to have to fight for our lives, and we've been here for thousands of years. And who are you people that would make me run from my life and watch my brothers and sisters and my sisters die? Who the fuck are you? This used to be the Garden of Eden. What happened?"

Tim Ferriss: I know we don't have time to get into it today, but Tatanka, the Story of the Bison?

Kevin Costner: Mm-hmm.

Tim Ferriss: Could you describe that briefly for people so they can look into it themselves?

Kevin Costner: It's a very humble little information center. I had bigger ideas for it that it could be a hotel, that it could ultimately be a museum. If there's anyone out there, entrepreneurial enough, I'm an entrepreneurial guy but I've put about as much as I can. If anyone thinks there's something missing in this country, like where the first people went, especially on the Plains, I have a place where we could make a great museum together. I fear that I've long chased everybody away from this interview a long time ago...

Tim Ferriss: Oh, no. There are still people listening.

Kevin Costner: If there's somebody out there burning to keep that story, which is our story, alive I have the place to put it. And along with it, I'll put these incredible statues, the story of the bison. These bronzes that are amazing.

Tim Ferriss: it sounds spectacular.

Kevin Costner: Right there in Rapid City, right there actually in Deadwood. I need a partner now. I've done all the heavy lifting I can.

But if somebody is in love with our history, and has a way through money and love of the history to keep it alive, you come be my partner.

Tim Ferriss: Do you recall your Twitter handle, offhand?

Kevin Costner: My what handle?

Tim Ferriss: Your Twitter...

Kevin Costner: I don't do Twitter.

Tim Ferriss: Okay.

Kevin Costner: I don't do Facebook either, but I'm told I have an account.

Tim Ferriss: I will do some detective work and put in the show notes perhaps how you can track down Mr. Costner.

Kevin Costner: Thanks. I just need one guy.

Tim Ferriss: Just one guy.

Kevin Costner: I don't want a bunch of partners. I need one guy that goes, "I like this stuff, and I've got a ton of money." We are going to remember this stuff, and we're going to do it in a really classy way.

Tim Ferriss: If you could put one billboard anywhere, what would it say? What would you have on the billboard? Not the book.

Kevin Costner: I'd put it in Washington and I'd put no term limits.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, no term limits.

Kevin Costner: Yeah. I'd say, enough. You know what? We don't need more experience. We need a work ethic that by the time you're done there, you don't want to go back after one term or two terms. You're done after two. Experience is not helping us; it's clogging us up.

Tim Ferriss: Two more and that's it. What advice would you give to your 30-year-old self?

Kevin Costner: To my 30-year-old self? I'm going to say something. We talked about the conservative upbringing I had, the idea that you were going to do this; this is how a man makes a living. My turning point was at 22 when I said I'm going to be an actor and I don't care what anybody else thinks. I wish I could have got that advice earlier, but I had to actually give it to myself. So what would I give myself at 30?

I think I would have stayed in more control of the projects that I lent my name to.

Tim Ferriss: Good advice. I'm 38 now. That's the conclusion I just came to last year, in retrospect. And last question is: do you have any asks or requests of everybody listening to this? Is there anything you would like them to take away with them? Obviously, everybody will see in the show notes and elsewhere *The Explorer's Guild*. But is there any message or parting comment or suggestion that you'd like to make?

Kevin Costner: One, obviously whatever audience it is that's out there that's supporting you likes the long form of communication.

I hope your audience understands that we like it, too. The thing that's hard for us is to go on these nighttime television shows and come up with some small, pet joke and then you introduce your movie and then you're done. So this has been good for me. I do want to return for the book, for those who have waited through this interview with us. This was something that I didn't know was going to be in my life. This book, which I hope you read, it turned out better than I thought it ever could.

It was really something that I'm proud to be a part of. I hope you not only get the book, but the book does something to you which I think all stories or art can do, which is – and it's something we all have in common. I know that when I read something great, the first thing I want to do is share it. I know when I hear a great song, the first thing I want to do is share it. If I hear a joke, the first thing I want to do is share it. It's the same with movies.

And I hope that when you read *Explorer's Guild*, your first instinct will be I need to share this. That really is what I hope, you know? And my advice out there for people who get so completely overwhelmed by Christmas, it's a great way to stuff your stocking. Take the thinking out of things. You don't know what to get somebody? Get them *The Explorer's Guild*. Let them go on their own journey.

Tim Ferriss: It's a beautiful book and you're a wonderful creator. I really appreciate all the time.

Kevin Costner: Thank you.

Tim Ferriss:

I'm a huge fan of your work so please continue to create and collaborate with other people. And I'm waving to Jon, just a few feet away, also thank you. I appreciate you guys making the time. And to everyone listening, you can find the show notes and links to everything at [fourhourworkweek.com](http://fourhourworkweek.com), all spelled out, forward slash podcast or just go to [fourhourworkweek.com](http://fourhourworkweek.com) and click on podcast. And as always, thank you for listening.