

EPISODE 197

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:34]

FT: Hey, welcome back to So Money, everyone. I'm your host, Farnoosh Torabi.

What's your definition of cheap? I'm curious. Do you think that you're cheap or is someone you know is cheap? Perhaps the person you're living with? I got into trouble once because I went on ABC News and the topic was “Cheap versus frugal” and they wanted my opinion. So I went on a limb and I said that, “From my perspective, I think frugal is great. Frugal is sort of savvy-spending, it's a wise thoughtful approach to spending your money and managing your money. Cheap on the other hand means you're wasting time and energy to save money. It's sometimes being inconsiderate, sometimes being rude, harmful in the pursuit of saving money.”

As an example, maybe an extreme example, I mentioned that some forms of extreme couponing exemplify this. Boy, did that get the couponers mad. I got so much hate mail, I literally had clusters of couponers coming at me on Facebook, Twitter and personal email. It was like, wow, the power of the media. People are watching ABC. But at the same time I was like, “What did I say? I must have really made them angry.” And then it was that they just didn't like the idea of couponing being equated to something that was “cheap.”

Of course not all couponing is bad, but I know there are people out there who spend hours a day cutting coupons and all they have to show for is like \$20 or \$30 saved – which isn't insignificant, but when you account for all that time and the energy, and maybe the fact that you were cutting coupons while your kid wanted some help with his science project – I don't know, I'm making this up, but that might happen and in that scenario – that's not frugal, that's cheap. If you're going to hate me for saying that, I'll take it.

Which brings me to today's guest, Jeff Yeager, dubbed the Ultimate Cheapskate by Matt Lauer on NBC's Today Show, specializes in teaching others how to spend smart so that they can spend less and live frugally. He's also an accomplished author of several books on the topic

including *Don't Throw That Away*, *The Cheapskate Next Door* and *The Ultimate Cheapskate's Road Map to True Riches*. He host the Cheap Life on YouTube, which also provides a video content about living the good life at a fraction of the cost. If you're an AARP member, you might recognize his name. He's one of their savings experts.

Before launching his career as a freelance writer, public speaker and media personality, Jeff spent 24 years working as a CEO and Senior Executive with national nonprofit organizations in Washington DC. During this time, he strictly managed his finances, realizing that he was able to reduce his dependency on money to the point that he could retire if he wanted. It was then that he made the conscious choice to change careers since he didn't have to worry about his paycheck.

Now, Jeff also likes to call this the day he became selfishly employed. Jeff used his new-found financial freedom to pursue a career in writing and multimedia journalism to help others learn to live with less and since then, he has been on major media outlets including The Today Show, CNN, Fox, CNBC and countless others.

Several takeaways from our conversation with Jeff: his take on the word “cheap,” how do you define cheap and why does it get a bad rep? What would “enough” look like for you? What does enough money mean; and Jeff's breakthrough career moment, which was not unlike mine. So we share some things in common. Here we go, here is Jeff Yeager.

[INTERVIEW]

FT: Jeff Yeager, welcome to So Money. You're the person that my guest have wanted to hear from many times. I've been getting lots of emails, “Let's get Jeff Yeager on So Money.” And so, happy to say here you are. Thanks for joining us.

[00:04:31]

JY: Well, thanks so much for having me on. I'm a big fan of yours and I know that among your audience members are many loyal brothers and sisters of the cheap, so I'm honored to be on the show today.

[00:04:43]

FT: Yes. Let's start with the word "cheap." Culturally, this is something that sends a visual reaction. People think, "Oh, cheap. Man, this is an awful person, someone who has no moral grounds, who's mean, rude, will do anything to save a buck." What is your definition of cheap, Jeff?

[00:05:06]

JY: I'm glad you brought that up first because sometimes I forget to address it. I'm known as the Ultimate Cheapskate and I very specifically chose the word "cheapskate" to really engage people's imagination and interest in what is open, a very important conversation, I should say. I've written four books, all of which have a degree of humor to them. So I have a lot of laughs at the notion of getting cheap at my own expense, but I don't mean to cheapskate in the traditional screwed-like sense. The people that I write about are really black belts of smart spending. They're by the way very generous individuals. They're not dishonest, they're not greedy, they're not focused on trying to emancipate bank account, they've really figured out what money has to do with life, and happiness and get on with it.

So, I don't use it in a pejorative sense. I mean call us "frugal." I never use the F word myself. They call us "frugal," they call us "thrifty spenders," call us "smart consumers" – we're actually folks who are less concerned about money than most Americans, we figured out what is important to us, why in life and we get on about it.

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FT: I like that, financial black belts.

[00:06:17]

JY: Yes. As I like this, I don't write books about how to get rich. That makes my books a little bit unusual on the personal finance realm because most personal finance books are about how to get rich. I write books about how to get happy, perhaps with what you already have.

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FT: Let's start with your journey to getting happy with what you have. You were working in nine-to-five for many years in DC, you were working for nonprofit organizations, you got to a point where you said, "This isn't for me. This isn't one that's making me happy." How did you ultimately make the transition and what was your goal?

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JY: I like to think I approach this from a different perspective for most personal finance on writers because I spent 25 years – and by the way, I did enjoy those 25 years as a CEO and Senior Executive managing national nonprofit organizations in Washington DC. So most personal finance writers come from it from the point of view of investment banking, or fund management, or certified by initial planners. That's not me. I write only about the spending side of personal finance and a lot of the wisdom I hope we impart comes from that 25-year career on a nonprofit sector.

When you think about a nonprofit organization, it's a lot like a lot of people's budget. They don't have the luxury of unlimited income, but they can do a lot of creative thinking on the expense side of things and I don't write about sacrifice or deprivation to get back to that cheapskate [inaudible]. I write about really deciding what's important in your life and getting on with it – and I argue that the spending side of personal finance, which is rarely written about, most of the writing is on the revenue side of personal finance – is at least as important as the revenue side and here is the good news, it's something that you have a heck of a lot more control over.

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FT: What's your take on extreme couponing? I have to ask because I got attacked by internet trolls because I went out and I said that some forms of couponing can actually be counter-

productive and if you ask me, I think it could constitute as “cheap” in a bad way, in a sense that there are some people out there who knew who you are or you know them, who are cutting coupons, spending a lot of time and not really making much savings in return and in along the way are sacrificing time with their families or doing other things that would be more meaningful to them. That to me like counterproductive and perhaps cheap and I got lots of hate mail over this. What's your take on something like couponing which culturally is so popular, but I think border on the bad side of cheap?

[00:09:13]

JY: For one of my books, my second book is called *The Cheapskate Next Door*, I surveyed the 320 families all self-identified to me, mainly fans of my first book that I survey them about their attitudes towards money, and life, and happiness, and religion, and the environment and everything. The conclusion I came to is there's no one best or right way when it comes to tasked frugality. It's whatever works for you. So, on that question of coupon use in general, not necessarily extreme coupon use, I found that about half of my cheapskates love their coupons. Maybe they're not extreme couponers in terms of that reality show, but they loved coupons.

The other half – and I put myself in this category because I rarely use a coupon. I love the quote from Scratch, he invent my menus off the best of the best weekly store specials and I'm not organized enough to really use coupons. The answer is whatever works best for you, but writing throughout all of my books is the notion that however you choose to save money, you need to be honest and forthright and polite in it. For instance I write a lot about haggling or negotiating for better price on things and rule number one is to be a nice guy. Don't be a jerk. So, there's no one right path to frugality and you always need to take that high ground.

Here is something that sets what I call my cheapskates aside from what you might think of when you think of a cheapskate. This are to [inaudible], these are a very rare type of American. They actually spend considerably less time shopping than most Americans. For them, shopping is not recreation, it's not an enjoyable exercise at all. They're smart, they're strategic, they do their research in advance, but most of all, they just spend less time in the stores. So these are the people who run [inaudible] on reality television to stock their entire basement with toilet paper because they had the coupons.

[00:11:12]

FT: Because they had a coupon. Right. Well, Jeff, what would you say is your number one financial philosophy? We talked a lot about your theories and ideas over spending. What about overall overarching financial philosophy?

[00:11:29]

JY: My books do pretty well with works of humor. In fact my first book *The Road Map to Riches* is almost released by the publisher which is Random House as a book of humor as opposed to a book of economics or personal finance, but they have to release them in a category eventually that decided the release of this personal finance. But I try to add a laugh track to what is ultimately of serious messages and advice that I give in the books and underpinning all of my books is this notion that I believe that most Americans – not all Americans but most Americans – would actually be happier and the quality of their life would actually increase if they would only spend and consume less.

Again, it's not about deprivation or sacrifice, it's about really discovering the joys in life and yes, realizing that a whole lot of those joys in life come without a price tag.

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FT: Can you give me a specific example of how this philosophy has played out well in your life?

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JY: I grew up at the midwest, I'm 57-years-old and I'd like to say, Farnoosh, that the worst of all possible age at 57, I'm too young for medicare and too old for women to care.

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FT: That's not true.

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JY: But anyway, I grew up in the rural midwest, lower income family and even though it might create a nonprofit sector, my wife and I sort of got caught up in that rat race of always spending everything we earned and then maybe even then some. Then we sorted down what I call the money steps of spend up to your income levels and maybe even a little bit more as we know most Americans do, and then I had a sort of epiphany and it began reflecting on like the lies my grandparents had and the course my grandparents raised families during the great depression, and what I came to realize was even though they had a lot less money and a lot less stuff that even my wife and I did at that point in their life, they enjoyed a quality of life that was probably better than ours and that had to do not with money and stuff, it had to do with other things that you really can't buy.

So, I started focusing and I've written a lot about this, particularly on my first book about what enough is for you. I don't want anybody to live in poverty, but I want people to ask themselves the question, "What would enough look like for you?" Enough money and enough stuff and everybody's answer is going to be different. I'm a notorious cheapskate, America's cheapest man so I tell you in my books, this is how I lived, this is enough for me, but I'm not saying you should live like that. But you should certainly ask yourself the question, "What would enough look like?" Unless you ask yourself that question – and please ask it while you're still young – how will you know when you've ever arrived? Money is incredibly relative, whereas a lot of money for me is no money at all for somebody else and the other way around. That's really what you need to grapple with, is that lifestyle, quality of life issue, what would enough look like?

In the case of my wife and I, we've decided fairly early on in our marriage that we were living pretty good and we could always live at this level and you know, we're both college-educated, had responsible jobs, so we established what we call the "permanent standard of living." We agreed that we would rather than rush out and spend every pay raise we go, sort of continue to live at that same level. So, we want a nice but really modest price house when we're first starting out, we paid it off as quickly as we could and we still live there 35-40 years later. We're happy as could be and as a result of that and some other things, at the ripe full age of 47, I was able to just drop out. Retire essentially, I call it being unselfishly employed. I have enough

financial freedom to do whatever the heck I want and sometimes people pay me money for that and that's good, too.

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FT: That's a great story. I love that you would very much remind me of Warren Buffet in some ways where he is known to be still living in the home that he purchased with his wife many decades ago where he raised his kids. He could afford a thousand houses, a much bigger house, he chooses to maintain his lifestyle in some way. Certainly, he advanced his lifestyle in other ways – private jets, things like that – but I think day-to-day living, he's got some very moderate taste and has not really taken on fancier things just because he can afford it. I think it is really inspiring.

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JY: Yes and that's not uncommon among folks like that. Again, I don't instruct people on how to become rich. I think Warren is a great individual. If I'm like him, I'm like him only minus with the 16 zeros or something in terms of net worth. I love one of Warren's best lines, he says, “I wear expensive suits, they just look cheap on me.”

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FT: Oh. Well, what would you say is your greatest memory of money growing up as a young cheapskate?

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JY: I told that story in the very first chapter of my very first book and it's true, it's sort of fitting since I am the Ultimate Cheapskate. I have a memory. I could have only just been a few years of being out in the yard, in a suburban area with my mom and I saw a shiny dime in the dirt at the side of the road and before she could stop me, I ran over to the road. I picked up that shiny dime and I swallowed it.

[00:17:14]

FT: What?

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JY: It maybe is a bad sort of the [purf] and I swear to God, sometimes when I fall asleep at night, I can still taste that kind of metal in my throat. I was like a human piggy bank. That's my breeding as a person but money is always interested, be not so much in coveting it, but the whole notion that it's a trade-off of course between your time, the finite time you have here on Earth and how much money you could earn and what you really want and so on. That ultimately evolved into this philosophy that obviously the whole thing goes, what less could often can be more – and I'm not saying everybody should lead the lifestyle I'm leading but again, I think they should ask themselves that question, “What is enough? What would that look like for you?”

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FT: What would you say is your worst money decision? Like something that was just a failure for you? Financial failure.

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JY: I like that I don't make too many of them because it takes the jaws of life to get the wallet out of my trousers as my wife will attest to and my wife, [inaudible] to my poor wife. We've been married 31 years where she says three good years, not all at once. But I told her the other day, “Yet again, Denise, whenever I don't listen to my own advice, I'm reminded of how truly brilliant I am.” Here is the latest example. I want to write my last book and I fell into a deep depression, thinking I couldn't possibly write another book, it's the *How to Retire the Cheapskate Way*. I decided that I needed to buy a new computer, treat myself to a new computer for this massive book that I'd sign the contract saying I would write.

My philosophy on technology and computers is always to buy the absolute most basic piece of technology, the most basic computer, machine, whatever, to meet your needs. All I do is use it

as a glorify word processor and I surf the web for research purposes. So I don't need all these bells and whistles. Well, I went to the store to buy that computer and I go over some ambitious Best Buy salesman latched on to me and ultimately convinced me to buy a computer that was much bigger, much more expensive, much more elaborate than I knew what I wanted.

I liked it because it has a very big screen and my desk is a big piece of plywood, its back thorn off and my eyes are giving out, so I do need a big screen. So I said, "Okay, I'm going to get this." Well, the salesman said, "Mr. Yeager, best thing about this is it has a touch screen feature. You can either use a keyboard, or you can pull up a keyboard on the screen, you can touch it, you can do this, you could do that." I said, "Yes, yes, yes. Right. I'll never use that. I wish I could get the same machine without it." "Well, you can't. It's included." At God knows what kind of price. So anyhow, to make the long story somewhat short, I bring the computer home, I worked out of my garage in rural Maryland, and this worked my little offices, and sometimes my wife goes in after I close up for the night, and she uses the computer which is fine. We only have the one in the house, but she started doing really weird stuff on the computer like I was working on this book and she would shrink all my manuscript down to the tiny font overnight, or she was surfing really weird websites in the middle of the night.

I said, "Denise, you got to stop this. I don't care if you use my computer but don't change my documents." Then she said, "I'm not doing it." This went back and forth for a couple of weeks. Finally, I got up more early one morning and I went off on my office before it was light and you know what? Moths and mosquitos were flying into that computer screen with enough pressure to do all these stuff on the touchscreen.

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FT: Wow. So sensitive.

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JY: Here is a perfect example of I spent some amount of mark at this technology, not taking my own advice to buy the most basic machine and what do I get? This problem. Now, the problem to that story is a computer friend of mine said, "Jeff, it's really easy to change the setting so that

the moths can't change the screen." I said, "Honestly, they're writing some pretty good stuff now." So, I said, "I think I'll just leave it like it is."

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FT: The foreword written by a moth.

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JY: Right.

[00:21:46]

FT: Man, are you still using this computer? Or have you sent it back or what?

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JY: I think I probably have been through a couple of them by now, all cheap models. I'm sort of an Amish guy when it comes to computer technology.

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FT: Nothing wrong with the Amish. My husband is from Lancaster Pennsylvania and he wrote many Amish live and they're beautiful people. I would love to interview someone from the Amish country to be on this podcast. I don't think it's permissible. Maybe it is, I don't know. They've managed money so interestingly.

[00:22:21]

JY: I've written a lot about the Amish and I've interviewed them for some of my books. I'm intrigued by their lifestyle. One of the things I'm intrigued by their lifestyle is if you know about the things that they have in their lives and the things that they're forbidden to have in their lives, on the surface of it it makes no sense at all – why they can have this but not that. The thing I

respect about that approach gets back to the point I was making earlier about what “enough” is for you.

For instance, I never owned a cellphone in my life and nothing awful has ever happened to me. I have nothing against people who own cellphones, but I decided in my case, it was not going to add to the quality of my life and that wasn't just about costing more, it was also just about not wanting to be so accessible. So I respect that about the Amish that they at least ask themselves, “Is this going to have a good impact or a bad impact on my life?” The other interesting thing about the Amish of course is that many of them are extremely wealthy. They're savvy investors, there are investing firms specialized just in working with the Amish and because they have a modest lifestyle, that doesn't mean they have a modest income and so many of them are extremely wealthy.

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FT: What would you say is your greatest financial moment, like your “cheapest moment?” That was such a great example of all of your philosophies, all of your great genius advice put into practice.

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JY: I guess it would be – and I don't know if you could say it a cheap moment but it's a story that I've told quite a number of times that I think brings out a couple of interesting points – and it is the little tale of how I became discovered as the ultimate cheapskate. After 25 years in the nonprofit sector, I dropped out of society. I just decided I would do my own thing and if I earned some money at that [inaudible], I just do it. So I start to do some writing, a combination of humor and practical life for spending and consuming less. But as you well know, writing is a very hard way to make a living and I'm selling a little bit of work for a nickel word here and there. At any rate, Michelle Singletary, the nationally syndicated columnist for the Washington Post ran a contest. This was about eight years ago, looking for the cheapest person in America and of course, my wife said, “Jeff, you have to enter. You clearly are America's cheapest man.”

So the prize was \$50. I was really psyched, I entered the contest and about a month later, she announced the winners. You know what? I didn't win. In fact I wasn't even listed as a runner up and I was only discouraged and that I had some of what I thought was some of my best and funniest writing and apparently didn't make the grade. About a week later, I got an email absolutely out of the blue from the NBC Today Show. I almost deleted it as spam because I never had any contact with them. First sentence was, "You don't know us, but we think you should have won the \$50 prize." It turned out Michelle Singletary was going to be a guest on their show. They were doing a segment on frugality and they asked her if she knew of anyone who does more of a humorous take on this.

She said, "Well, I ran this contest and this guy didn't win for a variety of reasons, but my staff and I thought his writing was really funny." So they called me out, did a little interview that had me on the show and that's how I get my start. I've been on the Today Show a couple of dozen times over the years.

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FT: We share that in common. I got my start being on the Today Show. It's quite the platform. I'm curious though, why weren't you selected? When you finally met Michelle backstage, did you ask her? Like, "If I'm the hilarious cheapskate, why didn't I win?"

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JY: It's an ongoing dispute between us. I implied she still owes me the \$50. The moral of the story is if I have not pulled the plug on my nine-to-five job, and going off and done my own thing, that never would have happened to me. On that Sunday when I entered her contest, if you'd ask me what's the best thing that could happen, I would have said with absolute enthusiasm, "I can win \$50." Well, you know I didn't, but all of this other stuff followed from that.

I'm actually working on a vague idea for a new book that has to do with the value of pursuing opportunities, [inaudible] in our society. I'm not saying that everybody or writers can launch their career in the way I just outlined, but I think everyday, there are so many opportunities that stare us all in the face, but we live in a culture which increasingly frowns on the idea of taking

advantage of those opportunities, “You're on this track. You're not allowed on that track. You're on this track.” I just think life is a heck of a lot more fun and you might really have a blast by being a bit more opportunistic.

[00:27:26]

FT: It's true. I think that in all of our lives, we anticipate “success” happening in a certain way very linear or we anticipate things. We just have it in our head like how things are going to turn out and just because it doesn't turn out exactly how you envisioned, it doesn't mean that it doesn't qualify as a success, that the end will lead you to ultimately where you still wanted to end up, which is kind of exciting but also scary. You have to allow yourself to be open to all these new and sometimes frightful experiences when you're on your own.

[00:28:11]

JY: Right, amen. It seems to me like even during the course of my lifetime, people are locked in more and more to that specific track and I'm not saying that planning, and thinking, and so on is bad, but I've seen more people that when they have an opportunity, confronts it no matter how small it seemed. Imagine in this case, I had an opportunity to do a little something on the Today Show. But that into my credit, it's correlated to a career of writing books for Random House and other work. I think that there's something to be said for recognizing those opportunities and having the hutzpa to really act upon them rather than saying, “No, that's not the course that I'm on.”

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FT: Right, or, “I don't know enough about this so it can't be possibly a good idea.”

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JY: And your friends and family saying, “You're going to do what? You're going to leave that up because somebody said you could teach English as a second language in Japan, “You're going to do that?” That's crazy.

[00:29:20]

FT: Well, it happens. You just have to have compassion for these people and still do what you want to do. What would you say is your number one financial habit, Jeff, that helps keep you in charge of your money and feeling like you have secure finances?

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JY: I think it's real simple. My advice is very old-school but it's right if I don't say so myself.

[00:29:45]

FT: You may.

[00:29:46]

JY: I'm big on avoiding that, I don't believe in any of this, about the necessity of debt we have and it boils down to living within your means always, but below your means whenever you can and that pearl of wisdom that my grandfather taught me, "If you can't afford to pay for it now, you simply can't afford it." If you can't afford to pay it now, you simply can't afford it. I think it's as simple as that, I think there's no such thing as good thing as good debt. There's only bad debt and a worse debt. We've gone crazy on the consumption side. In America there was a study by Bankloans.com that you may have seen that projects that the average American today will spend more than \$600,000 in interest during the course of their lifetime. How is that making anybody happy other than bankers?

[00:30:46]

FT: Just a question about that philosophy, if you can't afford it today because perhaps you have too much on your plate, you're not making enough money, but can you hopefully afford it in the future if things change? Can you still keep that goal?

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JY: Yes and let me clarify because I did a lot of polling of 320 cheapskate families I mentioned before. I mean they're very unusual and that they loathe debt. They equate debt to having a disease or being in prison. The yoke of death for these rare American still weighs very heavily upon them, makes them extremely uncomfortable. Having said that, they do believe in the dream of traditional homeownership. Obviously in the vast majority cases, they need to borrow money in the form of a home mortgage. They buy homes which are about 75% less than the total they could qualify for.

Most people, they go to the bank. The bank says, "We'll loan you \$300,000 and what kind of home do you go shopping for?" "Well, \$300,000?" Not the cheapskates, they're shopping at 75%, they're staying in that home for a very long period of time, they're paying out their mortgage as quickly as they can, they're ignoring all conventional wisdom that says, "Don't prepaid your mortgage." They're getting that debt off their backs as quickly as they can. They loathe to borrow money for anything else in life if they have to. If they must, they again place the highest priority of paying off that debt as quickly as possible.

One of my cheapskates told me, "You know, Jeff, if my car conks out tomorrow and I only have \$1,200 in my savings account, I can guarantee you I'm going to go shopping for a \$1,200 car. I'm not going to go shopping for a car worth \$1,200 just a down payment. I'm going to buy at that level." It sounds so supple but it's really very practical and it makes you so much happier. Majority of Americans will go to their graves owing money on their home, or debt-secured against their home. I always feel like I should just say I rest my case at that point. How can living under that kind of yoke of debt, your whole life here on Earth make you any happier?

[00:32:53]

FT: Right. Amen to that. Now Jeff, let's move on to some So Money fill in the blanks. This has been a really profound conversation and you may not [inaudible] bad if you're as a listener clicking on this particular episode and seeing the title. Jeff, you're an ultimate cheapskate, you might think we're all going to talk today is couponing and stealing wifi from your neighbor. But actually, I love that you have really redefined cheapest in our culture and you've been on this

crusade for so long and doing such an important job, and leading by example. Let's have some fun now, end this interview with some hypothetical fill in the blanks. Shall we?

[00:33:33]

JY: Fire away.

[00:33:34]

FT: Okay. Let's say you won the lottery tomorrow. Let's say the ultimate cheapskate won a \$100,000,000. The first thing I would do is _____.

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JY: I would travel even more. I write a lot about travel. My wife and I have traveled to 40 different countries. We generally travel overseas a couple of months out of the year and not because we're rich, it's because we have no debt and we travel very inexpensively. We generally can travel for less than we can stay home. So if I had even more money, I would travel even more extensively, but I would not change the way in which we travel. We like to travel like local people live where we go.

That said, I also write a lot about charitable activity. I spent my career in a nonprofit sector and I found surprise, surprise, surprise, that the cheapskates I interview for my book tend to give twice as much as charity as the average American. My wife and I give about 20% of our income to a variety of charity. So, I would definitely be fed up. Beyond a certain point of enough, why do I need more money?

[00:34:44]

FT: Right.

The one thing that I spend on that makes my life easier or better is _____.

[00:34:53]

JY: Yes, I kind of have some fun with that in some of my books because often times, I get a version of that question, which is what's the one thing you're not afraid to spend more money on? A notorious cheapskate neighbor of mine once took me to test and question my credentials. So the cheapskate, when he saw that every couple of years I paid a guy to pump out my septic tank, he cleans his out with a bucket himself.

[00:35:19]

FT: Wow. No.

[00:35:22]

JY: I don't consider \$180 every five years to get it pumped out to be a luxury. He does. That neighbor by the way always wonders why we don't invite him to dinner.

[00:35:34]

FT: You'll be [purling] his way all to the dinner table, I'd be afraid.

[00:35:39]

JY: Another cheapskate friend of mine would ask, [inaudible], I thought had a great answer for a guy like May which is for every five or 10 years when he has a Colonoscopy, he does pay the extra money for the anesthesiologist. You can usually opt in or out of that. He said, "That's money I don't mind paying."

[00:35:56]

FT: That's investing in yourself. Good job.

Well, I got to ask you then. What's your biggest guilty pleasure?

[00:36:03]

JY: I suppose to most people, it would appear to be travel. When people hear the cheapskate, they think I'm somebody who's hunkered down in the mobile home somewhere it hasn't seen the world. At some point I want to write a travel book. All my books have a lot of advice about cheapskate travel and it starts from the premise that I don't know why we're put here on Earth, but I suspect implicit in the fact that we are here on Earth is some obligation to get out there and see it, and meet the people and see it. My contention is you don't have to have a lot of money to do that. You do it within your means and in fact my contention is also if you spend a lot of money like on luxury travel, you're defeating the whole purpose of it. You're not meeting real people and having real experiences.

So yes, people say, "Yes, he's a cheapskate. He used to travel 35 countries, spent months abroad at a time." If we travel abroad and rent out our house, we'll make money on the trip because of the way we travel.

[00:37:07]

FT: One thing I wish I had known about money growing up is _____.

[00:37:14]

JY: That lesson that I've mentioned twice, I think so far in the interview, but I'll mention it again because I think it's so important, is that money is relative. That what's a lot of money for you is very little money to someone else and the other way around. The thing I wished I've learned even earlier in life was to ask yourself the question of, "How much do I really want? How much do I really need? What would enough look like for me?" In my first book, I call it "slaying your Enoughasaurus." Coming up with that dollar figure, coming up with that lifestyle and everybody's hands is going to be different. I don't care what it is, but most people plod to life never asking themselves that question and of course if you don't ask yourself a question, how will you know when and if you ever arrived and as I say, call off the war from war.

[00:38:03]

FT: Absolutely. “Slaying off your Enoughasaurus.” I love that. It's such a great expression because it is a dinosaur of probably six heads.

Now, last but not least, Jeff, I'm So Money because _____.

[00:38:20]

JY: I guess I would say I'm So Money because I spend money and consume things wisely, so therefore things don't consume me.

[00:38:28]

FT: Love it. Jeff, what are you up to these days? You've done so much. I wanted to wrap here, but I'm actually curious, what's next for you?

[00:38:38]

JY: As we speak, I'm here at my parents home in Ohio, my wife and I. Unfortunately my father passed away three weeks ago rather unexpectedly and my mother is in the final stages of Alzheimer's disease. So my wife and I are staying here to care for her in their home. It's a very sad time for our family, but it's also a very precious time. I'm thankful that I have the freedom and not just the financial freedom, but other types of freedom that allows me to do that at this point in my life. So, my career such as it is, is on hold. I hope to write more books. I have been doing a web show for AARP called “The cheap life with Jeff Yeager” that I'm really proud up there – about 100 episodes on YouTube of that show. But right now is a different time for me. I have one opportunity to take care of my parents during this period in their life and that's what I'm doing.

[00:39:35]

FT: Well, that sounds really, really special and we're very sad to hear about your father, but I know that it's also like you say, bittersweet that you're being able to spend time with your mom now and that's what life is about. Right? You work hard and you make the good decisions so that when times like this arrive, you have the freedom to do what you want to do.

[00:39:57]

JY: And almost everything I've talked to you about on this show has been wisdom from my family, primarily from my parents who have their whole lives traveled widely. We didn't owe a television till everybody else in the neighborhood was in their second or third one, but my God, we traveled and we lived right. They are folks who I like to say know the secret of living everyday as if it's your last because one day, you'll be right.

[00:40:25]

FT: Yes. Well, thank you for sharing that message with us, Jeff and for taking the time right now to be with us. We really appreciate it. Everybody, check out Jeff Yeager. We'll put all of your information over at Somoneypodcast.com and we'll send you some visitors. How about that?

[00:40:41]

JY: Great. Thanks. Stay cheap.

[00:40:42]

FT: Stay cheap.

If you like to learn more about Jeff, his website is Ultimatecheapskate.com. He's on Twitter @Jeffyeager. We got all this info at Somoneypodcast.com where you can also find the transcript and comments from this episode and all previous episodes. I want to hear from you. Submit your question about money, work or life at Somoneypodcast.com, click on "Ask Farnoosh" and there's a really good chance that I will answer this weekend.

As a reminder, if you'd like to win a free 50-minute money session with me, hop on to iTunes and leave a review for the show. Every Saturday I select one new reviewer to get a 50-minute money blitz with me and I've been doing this for now several months, have had the great privilege of getting to connect with some of you one on one and I just love it. If this is of interest to you, leave a review and hopefully we will connect. Thank you so much for tuning in and again to my guest Jeff Yeager. I hope everybody on this podcast has a So Money day.

[END]