

Eric Weiner Introduction
16 July 2026 Bungee Book Club
Discussion of *Ben and Me: In Search of a Founder's
Formula for a Long and Useful Life*

It is a pleasure and a privilege to introduce Eric Weiner to this gathering. We almost met 10 years ago when Jim Bellis and I embarked on a successful quest to have him join the BBC as our Guest of Honor to discuss *The Geography of Genius* in August 2016. On a phone call to recruit him, I offered to buy him a beer, probably at Elephant and Castle (across the street from USAID), where Benjamin Franklin is quoted for the observation that “Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.”

We will shortly discuss *Ben and Me*, Eric's fifth book, after **The Geography of Bliss**, **Man Seeks God**, **The Geography of Genius**, and **The Socrates Express**.

It is worth noting that early in today's selection, Eric addresses Ben Franklin's core concern with utility. Despite having been named an Honorary Lifetime Bungee in 2016, Eric shares his internal struggles with us and asks on page 29, whether his own life is useful, and suggests that perhaps it is not.

Having read two of his previous works and this marvelous biography with its interlinear autobiography, I beg to differ.

Eric, I find your life highly useful, at least for me and our BBC community:

- You educate, entertain, and elucidate our past and present, pointing us with hope toward the future
- You equip us with delightful insights and wonderfully quotable quotes (which I tend to misquote) for our meditation and implementation
- You make us laugh
 - At the world around us
 - And at ourselves
- You publicly model humility and vulnerability with self-effacing humor and outright honesty, traits so desperately needed in this world of ours today.

I must conclude that all of these, and your own life, are very useful for us and our larger society.

I must also note, Eric, that you claim that books have a magical quality, to which I can only respond that you, sir, are a magician.

Thank you for returning to the BBC. I was unable to attend your first visit here, or even to follow through on my beer offer. Instead, I spent the summer of my 60th year in a residential

treatment program to overcome very unuseful addictive behaviors and intimacy disorders. But, like Ben, I chose growth over defeat. It is an honor to be here now.

And, by the way, the beer offer is still open.

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