How many wildlife biologists can claim they are named after a large rodent? Rich Chipman can. “My middle name is Beaver, which is my mom’s maiden name,” explains Rich. “So, I have always been very fond of *Castor canadensis*, the largest rodent in North America.”

Not only is Rich fond of the rodent whose name he bears, he’s embraced his family’s proclivity toward biological disciplines. His mom was a professor of microbiology and his grandfather, a professor of parasitology. “I chose the macro side of biology just to be the recalcitrant guy,” he confesses. “But I’ve come full circle and am now immersed in the micro side.” Much to his mother’s satisfaction who tells him, “I knew you’d come back.”

In June 2012, Rich Chipman was appointed Rabies Management Coordinator with the National Rabies Management Program in Concord, New Hampshire, succeeding his mentor and long-time friend, Dr. Dennis Slate.

Rich credits Dr. Slate with encouraging him to pursue his MBA. “Spending most of my time with non-human mammals, I lacked some critical formal training in business and operations management,” explains Rich. “Dennis understood an MBA was an integral part of my stepping into the breach and in 2009 said, ‘Let’s make it happen.’”

For Rich, deciding to go back to school was about gaining a transformative experience, finding intellectual stimulation, and satisfying a personal desire to learn business management skills. Oh... and having fun.

He carefully selected the UAlbany Weekend MBA Program because, “It was perfect,” proclaims Rich. “As a government employee, I could quickly see how ideal this program is for people in the public sector to learn about organizational behavior, strategic planning, and yes, even accounting.”

Goal Number One for Rich’s cohort, which ranged in age from 25 to 60, was to help every individual member flourish. “We created a collegial energy,” he shares with a sense of accomplishment. “We weren’t just working for our own successes, but for the betterment of the group.”

Holding a series of distinguished appointments within Wildlife Services, Rich has also worked with state wildlife agencies and universities in New York, Vermont, Maine, Kansas, and Costa Rica, receiving a significant number of awards. Additionally, he serves on numerous committees and has authored and co-authored more than 30 technical publications.

But it’s the authentic life experiences that make Rich Chipman light up, starting with his core focus: *his family*. Celebrating 30 years of marriage to a biologist next May 7, Rich and his bride Liz honeymooned in true ‘biology geek’ fashion, spending an entire year in Costa Rica studying bats. “We lived off rice and beans and immersed ourselves in the local culture, setting a really nice foundation for our marriage and our future.”
Their future included sons, Paul, 23 and Joe, 19. “Paul is about a semester away from graduating from the UAlbany sociology program and will intern this fall at a local homeless shelter in Albany,” says the proud father. “And Joe, who has always known what he wanted to do with his life, is a criminal justice major at Plymouth State with the goal of becoming a state trooper.”

Given their parents’ early work experience, it’s not surprising Paul and Joe have plenty of “batty” stories to tell. Two, which Rich categorizes as his “midlife crisis”: his banjo and his Forrest Gump Challenge.

Seven years ago, Joe found the banjo Rich had been given by his mom as a high school graduation present. Once again coming full circle into his mother’s aspirations for him, he began learning to play the banjo. “I play it just well enough to scare the dog and the neighbors,” Rich laughs. “For me, it’s a great stress release that really engages my mind.”

Following the midlife crisis rules, Rich also decided to get healthy and shed unwanted pounds. “I was five pounds away from being an entry level sumo wrestler,” he admits. “Seriously! I looked it up.”

Prone to take the road less traveled, Rich issued a ‘Forrest Gump Challenge’ for himself, determined to run every single day just as the Tom Hanks’ character did in the 1994 movie, Forrest Gump. Forrest ran every day until he reached three years, two months, and 14 days. Rich did likewise— and then more than doubled it, holding true to his three criteria: run outside; run at least two miles each day; and do not skip a day, no matter what. That was seven-and-a-half years ago and he’s still going strong.

Through bad backs, bad weather, bouts with the flu, and twisted ankles, Rich runs every day. Including when he and his MBA-cohort traveled to Beijing, China to study international business. Every morning he would run with no other runners in sight. One morning, he happened upon a native, who was also running. Relishing the thought of teaming up with a buddy, he asked the man if he could join him. Lost in translation, the man retorted, “No!”, assuming he’d just been asked if he spoke English.

So, Rich just smiled and ran with him anyway. For four to five miles they ran in step, competitively driving one another, exchanging only giggles and a few belly laughs along the way. “It was a matchless experience in a foreign land,” Rich remembers fondly. “Our only commonality was running. I never saw him again but will never forget the experience.”

This charismatic, enterprising man, who is so tapped in to relishing life, will readily share his “secret” dream is opening a microbrewery and pub featuring live folk music. Don’t be surprised one day to find Rich Chipman along with members of his MBA-cohort serving up craft beer and banjo music. The seed was planted in 2011 during one of their final MBA presentations about Samuel Adams Brewery, which they kicked-off by handing out beers. Class act!

“It was so evident that every person in my cohort was excited about being there and wanted to learn,” he shares with conviction. “If you crave a fun, high-energy challenge, the Weekend MBA Program at UAlbany is definitely the way to go.”
Connect with Rich Chipman here:
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