



"Getting Rich: Got to Rock On"

Pizza for breakfast, 3-card poker marathons, and hard rock heard round the clock are hardly the sorts of things that come to mind when one thinks of a typical actuary. Yet these are key components of a life well-lived according to Rich Bailey – a man who is far from being an unseasoned actuary. Rather, as Partner and East Market Financial Leader with Mercer, Rich is about as successful an actuary as they come, and he is as atypical as he wants to be. Rich has no problem taking it "up to eleven," and he encourages you to do the same. It is these attributes: his unapologetic passion and unflappable drive that make him the ideal role model for actuaries and everybody else for that matter.

If there's a message one might take away from Rich's wisdom, consider this: don't assume – be prepared, and most of all: be ready to be shown over (and over again) how much you **don't know anything for sure**. The silver lining is that these enlightening nuggets of wisdom are often nestled within deeply hidden buried treasures and those journeys tend to take a bit more work (and perhaps be a bit scarier) but are by far the most exhilarating - not to mention the most **fun!**

So please take a moment to get to know one of the CCA's Board of Directors - the heavy metal actuary: Mr. Rich Bailey!

Name: Rich Bailey / **Location:** Richmond, VA / **Employer:** Mercer / **Title:** Partner, and East Market Financial Leader / **Area of Practice:** Health

How did you get into the actuarial profession?

My father was in insurance as a medical director and when I decided I liked math, he and one of my math teachers both suggested I look into it.

What is your favorite part about being a CCA member?

The Annual Meeting and my service on the Board of Directors for the past 5 years. Both were made possible by being a member and getting involved.

Where did you go to school?

I started at Lehigh University seeking my EA (Engineering and alcohol) degree but later attended the University of Connecticut where I got a B.A. in Actuarial Science.

Who was a professional mentor of yours and how did he or she impact your career?

George Wagoner was Mercer's first chief health actuary and the lead actuary in Richmond when I began here working for him in 1995. I learned how to "super-please" a client and how to look at a problem (and its consulting solution) from the client's point of view. Brian Fuller and Mac McCarthy were the other two senior actuaries on board during my formative years and I took bits and pieces from all three to form my own style and approach. I have the three of them to thank for my successes.

How do you define yourself as a Consulting Actuary (i.e., what does it mean to be a consultant)?

Being able to take the client's perspective and understand their definition of success are key elements.

How do you define success?

When two people (peer-peer, consultant-client, or employee-supervisor) share a meeting of the minds about the nature of the problem and the challenges that lie ahead as we seek solutions. In short, I think mutual understanding is success. The rest of the work to finish the job is a formality.

Can you tell us about your favorite experience working with the CCA?

Meeting the high-caliber and genuinely professional board members when I first joined the board was very impressive. As an organization highly reliant on engaged volunteers, I was pleased to be involved with launching new approaches to tie volunteer efforts to personal and professional growth opportunities as we seek the marriage of the two.

Is there something about you people would be surprised by if they knew it?

Probably many things. I love hard rock and heavy metal, I'm under 6' but play a lot of volleyball, I grew up in New England and plan to get back one day, I own 3 metal detectors which have paid for themselves, my lifetime actuarial exam pass rate was 50% and spanned 12 years, I prefer ice fishing to many things, I love casinos and will play 3-card poker until I'm out of time or money, I keep a Keurig machine next to my bed so I can get up in the morning, pizza is my favorite food, at least for breakfast, and my Nike+ app says I've run over 3,000 miles since 2007. What won't surprise anyone is that my 2 kids are my real treasures.

What is the strangest thing someone has told you they assumed about being an actuary or what it means to be an actuary?

A friend thought it was sorcery: he said he thought I was able to tell him when he was going to die! Of course, I told him only life insurance actuaries can do that. As a health actuary, I could only tell him when he'd be going into the hospital.

Do you have a favorite book, newspaper, blog, or writer?

The Bourne Identity by Robert Ludlum. I like the movies but somehow, they can't figure out how to even tell the same story as in the original book.

What would the title of your autobiography be?

And From the Ashes We Can Build Another Day. This is a line from a Moody Blues song that has exemplified my entire life. Not everything goes as planned, and some things in life seem devastating. But knowing we are able to build anew if we have the courage to look forward...helps us get through the now.

What do you do in your free time?

I play volleyball, enjoy fishing, work on things in my house, I actually do some company work in my free time because it doesn't feel like work when I do it then...it's me getting ahead or caught up to make my week easier. I help my grown kids with things in their lives and have been enjoying the balance with friends. I'm almost always listening to rock music.

What advice do you have for future actuaries or actuaries just getting their careers started?

Three things: 1) Don't trust your models...good input only gives good output if the stuff in the middle is any good. 2) Don't believe there is right and wrong in our world. There is only better, worse, and maybe you can find optimal. Don't seek the right answer, seek a justifiable answer you can defend. 3) Eventually someone will look to you for an opinion, so begin thinking about what that will feel like and what it will take to put yourself in a position to offer an opinion you are comfortable with.

What do you see in terms of the future of the actuarial profession?

I think the profession is strong. Lines of business that actuaries practice in are changing and growing, so we adjust and train in new areas. Critical thinking is really what we do, and we put values to things that most people don't know how to approach (the unknown). As a health actuary I see a bright future in the U.S. as we will continue to struggle with rising health costs for the foreseeable future.

Do you have strong opinions about calculators?

Yes. The precision they afford you often isn't valuable in decision making. A rough idea of the magnitude of any problem is usually sufficient. But, nobody believes you unless you've calculated the number with 2 decimals. I bring my hp12C to prospect meetings to "prove" I'm an actuary. One last point, my first few actuarial exams were taken with a 4-function calculator. A few years later they added the +/- key as a fifth element which was a godsend. Prior to that, if you calculated a number and wanted to make it negative, you had to write it down, clear the register, and then key in zero, minus, your number. Seriously.

What is something about you that a lot of people don't know?

I'm a certified SCUBA diver.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last five years?

That sometimes you have to take the reins of something even if you don't know where it's going or what to do. If you're willing to own it, you often get a chance to do it your way. If you wait until you're voluntold, you'll be doing it someone else's way.

If you weren't an actuary, what else might you do for work?

Absolutely, no question, I'd be a shipwreck/treasure hunter salvor. I love the mystery and intrigue of the history and the hunt.

What does being a member of the CCA mean to you?

I've been fortunate to be a member since 1998 and in 2013 had the opportunity to join the Board of Directors. It was a big leap for me, but in retrospect has been one of the very best experiences I've had in my professional career. It gave me a lot of confidence to do things in my job that I wouldn't have otherwise approached.

Thank you, Rich, for taking the time to share this with us and the actuarial community. We are all better for it!