



**SOCIETY OF  
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# From the Chair Shared Knowledge

By Tony R. Litterer

In the Disney Pixar animated short film *Piper*, we first see a recently hatched sandpiper chick who is ready to start to forage for food. With a little encouragement from his parent, we see the chick take his first steps into a new world. The parent demonstrates how food may be found, and while the chick is busy enjoying the fruits of his newfound talent, he fails to notice the incoming surf. In the next scene, we see the chick with his feathers a bit ruffled and shivering from the unexpected bath he just endured. The next attempt to forage requires more coaxing from his parent. After all, his first experience was less than successful and left him afraid of what was out there.

Eventually, hunger wins out and he once again steps onto the beach. As he slowly makes his way to the waterline, he befriends a young hermit crab. While the chick is filled with wonder of his new friend, he once again fails to see the incoming surf. Somewhat akin to a deer in the headlights of a car, the chick freezes, not knowing what to do. Just before the surf is upon him, he realizes his friend has burrowed himself into the sand as a means of protecting himself from the onslaught of water. The chick mimics his friend and burrows his way into the sand. As the water engulfs them, they are quickly submerged and the relative peace of being underwater without the torrent of cascading water brings a new sight to behold. The hermit crab raps on the beak of the chick. The chick opens his eyes to behold a world he never would have seen had it not been for his friend. When the surf is high, all of the crustaceans become visible.

As soon as the surf recedes, the chick quickly digs up the crustaceans, enough food for himself and other sandpipers. No longer scared of the surf, the chick becomes a talented member of the flock.

Relating this story to any professional career path is simple. Along the way we gain knowledge from our experiences and from the people we meet. For many actuaries, the knowledge gained over the years comes from self-study and a handful of knowledgeable leaders, supervisors, colleagues and friends. The value placed on the knowledge varies for each individual, and



although someone may be intelligent, it is more meaningful to apply the knowledge in an effective manner.

Over the past three years, being involved with the Society of Actuaries (SOA) Taxation Section has taught me what is needed to prepare for an industry conference, how to lead a diverse group of individuals with a common goal and how to delegate and share responsibility. Being involved has added perspective and purpose that makes attending industry conferences more valuable. As a result of greater involvement I have had the opportunity to work with many experts in the field of insurance taxation. In many ways, I see my evolution has been much like that of the young, inexperienced sandpiper. The combined knowledge of the section members, past and present section council members and the numerous friends of the section are a treasure trove from which to draw support to better understand insurance taxation.

Volunteering for an SOA section does require commitment. However, my personal belief is that there is value in running for and accepting a seat on a section council. The experience can be rewarding for the newly designated Associate or a seasoned Fellow of the Society of Actuaries. There is always something more to learn and different perspectives to understand. Applying tax knowledge is part of my daily responsibility. Becoming the hermit crab for the next generation of sandpipers is also my responsibility. If you wish to learn more about insurance taxation, please attend one of the many sessions the Taxation Section sponsors at the industry meetings or express interest in becoming a council member. We are here to help you grow. ■

Tony R. Litterer, FSA, MAAA, FLMI, is an actuary at Fidelity & Guaranty Life Insurance Company and may be reached at [tony.litterer@fglife.com](mailto:tony.litterer@fglife.com).