

The Roundtable

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A Hawaii “vacation”- a news story adventure

Chris Facchini called on all his technology, writing and perseverance skills to create the stories of World War II Pearl Harbor veteran Robert Coles and his trip to Hawaii in December. The Channels 2/6 newsman told of narrowly missing getting the story because of bad luck, timing and, perhaps, a good dollop of good luck and serendipity.

Channel 2 News decided to cover the 92-year-old Mr. Coles’ trip to the 75th Pearl Harbor attack anniversary after learning about a GoFundMe note seeking funds to help Mr. Coles travel to Hawaii.

At that point, \$2,500 had been raised. Mr. Coles needed \$15,000. Immediately after WLBZ aired the story, \$10,000 came in. One donor, also a Navy veteran, donated \$7,000 of his own money. “Veterans look out for each other,” Mr. Facchini quoted the man as saying.

The Channel 2 team of writer and photographer faced a media crush of 400 (the Navy expected 200). Security was extremely tight, and media members had to be bused to Ford Island for the ceremony.

Adding to the stress of a five-hour time difference affecting story deadlines, Mr. Facchini told of the nail-biting moments and furious



Former Navy Radioman Robert Coles
WLBZ photo

texting with the back-home staff as he awaited for the tardy Mr. Coles' arrival. "We were given fifteen minutes to interview our subject." Mr. Coles arrived two minutes before the 7:45 a.m. ceremony. "We had one minute to interview him."



On camera- Chris Facchini

While the ceremony was proceeding, Mr. Facchini began tapping out the story on his laptop, only to discover that the video disc which he thought contained the 1-minute interview had, in fact, stunning imagery of feet running along the muddy ground. His videographer, caught up in the excitement of the chase to capture Mr. Coles on camera, had inadvertently pushed the "record" button. When the interview started, he pushed the record button which actually stopped the recording. The reporter had no video he could use.

At the end of the ceremony, he pleaded, prayed and pressed on to record an interview with Mr. Coles. The media was prevented from post-ceremonial interviews.

However, with help from the Navy, Mr. Facchini found himself in the right place at the right time: right in front of Robert Coles. With the USS Arizona Memorial in the background, Mr. Coles told of his trip and the ceremony on camera. "Social media has changed the way we do our jobs," Mr. Facchini said. He was able to get the Robert Coles story to Bangor/Portland with barely an hour to spare before airtime. He produced three different stories, one for each of the station's newscasts that evening.

"Special Person" meets "Special Person": Mr. Coles happened to meet Joe Torillo at the Honolulu airport. Mr. Torillo, a NYC Firefighter First Responder, was in one of the Twin Tower buildings when it collapsed on 9/11. He was badly injured, but is one of the few survivors from that event. Mr. Coles eschewed the title of "hero," and preferred "special person" who rises to the occasion presented to him. The interview with Mr. Torillo and Mr. Coles, and the half-hour program "Return to Pearl Harbor," are viewable on Channel 2's website. There are also some still photos worth seeing that were taken during Mr. Coles' trip from his home in Machias to Pearl Harbor.

But first...

President Kristy Kimball said we are invited to the Board of Directors meeting at Links Web Design, 735 Main Street, Bangor next Wednesday at 7 a.m. The meeting counts as a meeting make-up opportunity.

Judy Horan introduced her guest, Karen Araiza, the new news director for Channels 2 and 6. She told also about a new program about Maine agriculture that is produced by Maine veterans who have gone into farming. The first edition airs this Sunday at 11 a.m.

Kristy noted that today is **Ken Kimball's** third week in a row to serve as Sergeant-at-Arms *pro tempore*. He collected from **June Kontio**, who is praying for safe travel for her son as he drives to Tucson, Arizona where he will relocate. **Ken Huhn** gave a birthday dollar for his "baby brother" who is now 58. Ken's Rotary Moment described the process by which potential new members can be

identified, then taken through the membership process and the club's responsibility for new member retention (get them involved quickly).

Les Myers- January 5, 2017



Photo: WLBZ