Treadwell Reflects on Newtown Shooting

Thursday, 09 January 2014

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/140109.treadwell_sandy_hook.mp3{/audio}

Jay Barrett/KMXT

Alaska’s Lieutenant Governor was on a campaign swing through Kodiak this week, meeting with supporters as he runs for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate race. Mead Treadwell is seeking to unseat one-term Democratic incumbent Mark Begich.

During a wide-ranging interview with KMXT – which we’ll air on Talk of the Rock – Treadwell spoke about having attended Sandy Hook Elementary School in New Town, Connecticut, in the 1960s. The school was torn down last year after the December 2012 mass shooting there that left 26 dead.

“I transferred from Holly School in Newtown to Sandy Hook School in 1964. I was in the second grade. I remember that very well because the first week I was in school was right between Thanksgiving and Christmas. So I remember what it was like being a kid and all the anticipation of Christmas and all the joy. One of the first thing we did in Mrs. Heller’s class was cutting out construction paper. Probably eating the paste. But making things to hang in the hallways, and it was a great time to be a kid.”

It was that same season and those same hallways, some 48 years later, that Adam Lanza committed the mass murder.

“To know that this guy, Adam Lanza, blew out the plate glass window right next to a plague with my name on it, as a matter of fact, and other kids who’d been to the school, walk into a principals’ office where I had been a number times, and then turn left and go down the hallway where I had a class, it was awful. Then the press conferences were held in Treadwell Park, which was named after my dad – I had helped lay out that park for him, he had been our town’s First Selectman then. An incredibly sad situation.”

Treadwell said that 50-years earlier, he lived on the same school bus route that Lanza would’ve taken as a student. He said the tragedy had quite an effect on him and others from New Town:

“It’s turned me in a number of different ways. A thousand of us, including a family I didn’t know from Valdez came back from all over the world. And we talked not really about acts of Congress, but acts of kindness and how we can find those people who are suicidal and will take others’ lives with them and give them help before they do.”

In the wake of the shooting, there was a renewed call for stricter gun laws, to keep them out of the hands of the mentally ill, for instance. One solution offered by the National Rifle Association is to arm school teachers with firearms of their own so they may better protect their students in these kinds of situations.

“What do I think of arming teachers? I believe teachers have the right to be armed. I also believe we do have the right, as our university said, to say we’re not going to do it. I think we have to have a

discussion, and overall safety plan in a school. Some schools are better, may be safer, better without guns or an armed guard at the front. Appropriate exits – there’s going to be new designs for schools after Newtown. So, like most issues, I believe the right should be there, but you also have the local decision. I think a school board can make that decision here in Kodiak or in Anchorage or wherever, but that right should exist.”

Treadwell is currently running for the U.S. Senate, and faces Dan Sullivan and Joe Miller in the closed republican primary election this summer. The winner will take on incumbent Senator Mark Begich.

You can hear much more from our interview with Treadwell on Talk of the Rock, at 12:30 Tuesday afternoon.