

# Thatcher Family Interview



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**Interview by Dan Thatcher**  
**Government**  
**3/30/11**

The Thatcher family began in the spring of April 1946 when Eileen Weightman married the love of her life William John Thatcher. It was that same year they moved to Butte officially calling it their home. To the union of Marriage were born five boys and two girls all getting raised in good ol Butte, Montana. It was because of these two people, my grandparents that I am here today. The Thatcher family has been in Butte since the year of 1946 when my grandparents decided to come to this booming mining town, trying to find a way to make money. Today out of the seven children Eileen and William Thatcher raised five of them still call Butte home. The Mining City has been a place that my family heritage holds true to its heart. This dirty old mining town has treated us well, with wide open arms. My family has been in Butte for decades, igniting my passion and love for this old little town. This little old town and its people make me realize how lucky I am to call Butte, Montana my home.

Eileen Marie Thatcher was born on November 28, 1921 to John and Marie (Fitzgerald) Weightman in Lemon, South Dakota. My grandma Eileen attended St. Mary's grade school, soon after graduating from Lemon High School in 1939. After graduation she moved with her parents to Red Lodge, shortly after heading to Seattle, Washington with a group of close friends. While in Seattle my gram was employed by Safeway and Boeing Aircraft. A few years later Eileen and her husband William moved to the Mining City for the purpose of my gram being a nurse at St. James Community Hospital. Eileen retired from St. James Hospital being member of the Eagles Lodge, AARP, served as a teamster and also was on the National Committee to preserve Social Security and Medicare. Eileen's main devotion was providing for her friends and family. To me, my grandma Eileen was the most gracious and loving person in the world. The spring of late May 2003 my gram died in her sleep with complications of a stroke.. William John Thatcher was born on July 14, 1917 in Kellogg, Idaho to Limmie and Alfred Thatcher. William worked as a miner for the Anaconda Company until his death in 1969. After meeting Eileen in Seattle the two of them fell in love, deciding to come to Butte for job openings. William Thatcher was a blue collar miner that worked hours on end providing for his family. William believed in hard work and acting as a man for his wife and seven children. According to my dad, his dad was never home because he was at the mines day in and day out. William John Thatcher died at the age of 52 on October 15, 1969 the cause of a Coronary Occlusion, leaving my gram and the seven of her kids behind.

My name is **Dan Thatcher** and I am a senior at Butte Central High School. It is March 30, 2011 and I am here to interview my dad, Mike on the history of Butte. My primary interests are to talk about the history of the Thatcher Family and the culture of Butte, Montana back in its heyday.

**Mike Thatcher:** Thanks Dan for taking the time and giving me the opportunity to be interviewed. It is with great privilege and honor I get to share with you some of my fondest memories of being raised in Butte, MT. I was the last child born to William and Eileen Thatcher in Butte. I have four older brothers and two older sisters. Also, my family lost a daughter before I was born. My mom was the third oldest of thirteen children. All of her brothers were career military; all serving career terms in the Marine Corps. My mother lost a couple of brothers in those wars in which they served. Mom left her home town of Lemmon, South Dakota when she was 18 and went to work in Seattle at Boeing. Ironically, she was called back to Lemmon where she was born and

raised, as her mother passed away and she had 10 younger siblings that she became responsible to raise. One of the greatest tragedies in my mom's lifetime was one day when she was responsible for babysitting her two younger brothers, Walter and Mooney. They and a friend were playing and dug a tunnel underneath some railroad tracks. One of their friends left to go home and rode his bike over the tunnel and it caved in and killed both of them. They were 12 and 9 years old. This gives you some indication of some of the tough times she had. My mom was raised during the Great Depression and she used to tell stories of having very little, i.e., two dresses although high school and literally having to eat lard sandwiches. My mom's dad, John built grain elevators around the country so he was not home much so my mom really got put to the ungodly task of trying to raise all of her younger brothers and sisters. I have always had the greatest admiration for her. My mom was raised in a Catholic family. Her father's last name was Wheatman, which is German and they changed it to Weightman. Mom's heritage is Irish, Welsh, Dutch and English and just a few months ago, I found out that I have some German in me (Wheatman) – so that means you do too, Dan.

My mom met my dad in Kellogg, Idaho in 1939. They married that spring and my oldest brother John was born in Wallace, Idaho. Dad was a miner, who left home at age 15 and was kind of the black sheep of his family and unbeknownst to me, when I was 23 years old I discovered that my father had been married prior to meeting my mother and had 3 children from that union. All of my new-found half-siblings are all older than my brothers and sisters. I have a half-brother and two half-sisters. Ironically, it was assumed that everyone in our family knew of this and it wasn't until I attended a family reunion held in Issaquah, Washington that I found out that I had half-brothers and two half sisters, with which I have maintained minimal contact.

At any rate, my dad spent most of his years mining and later on completed barber school when he was diagnosed with emphysema and asthma and was unable to continue mining, in 1959, the year I was born. My father spent the early years of his life mining throughout Arizona, Idaho and Montana. Most of my siblings have been pretty-much raised in Butte. We lived throughout the hill in Butte – Agate Street, St. Mary's Parrish, Woolman Street and eventually in 1964, my mom and dad purchased a house at 361 East Granite. This was a boarding house that had approximately 24 rooms in it and it was previously owned by 2 sisters who were retired teachers who were spinsters and died in their 90's. My mom and dad paid less than \$5,000.00 for this house.

Prior to her passing, mom told me that the house was full of antiques and she was able to sell the antiques, over a period of years, which helped put all of her children through Catholic schools. When we moved to the Eastside from Agate Street up in St. Mary's Parish, the majority of my siblings went to Sacred Heart and I also attended Sacred Heart during the first grade. In 1965, my parents sold our house at 361 West Granite Street for \$15,000, at which time they purchased a house for the same amount at 629 West Park Street.

Before talking about the move to Park Street, I want to talk about what growing up in the Eastside of Butte was like. When I was a youngster, all of the neighborhoods were basically separated into parishes and there were approximately 10 to 12 Catholic schools throughout Butte at that time. Most kids went to their own parish activities and schools, which had their own gym, church, etc. As I said, my family lived within the Sacred Heart Parish and, as such, I attended both Sacred Heart Church and Sacred Heart

School. Additionally, there were Catholic schools located throughout Butte in the McQueen Addition, (Holy Savior & St. Raymond's), St. Mary's up on the hill, Immaculate Conception on the upper west side, St. Patrick's, St. John's & St. Joseph's in central Butte and St. Ann's out on the "flats." Growing up when I was a youngster, you pretty much hung around your neighborhood. In addition to the Catholic schools, there were many public schools in Butte that have since been closed or, in some cases, razed – Washington, Grant, Madison, Harrison, Blaine, Sherman, McKinley, Hawthorne, Greeley, Monroe, Lincoln etc. The majority of the Irish families in Butte sent their kids to Catholic schools and it was financially challenging when there wasn't a lot of money to go around.

I remember growing up on East Granite Street where, at times, we had transients living with us. We had chickens, rabbits and we really didn't have much of anything; however, nor did anyone else in the neighborhoods. Interestingly enough, growing up in Catholic schools, everybody had to wear uniforms, both boys and girls, so you didn't have to worry about what clothes you were going to wear and some people had no idea as to how much money your family had. It was my experience that the kids who grew up on the hill, stayed together, even as they got into high school. I got a great education from the nuns and the priests and later in high school from the Christian Brothers. One thing for certain, the early lesson hard-learned was that you never took home what happened at school, which usually involved getting thumped. If you went home and squealed, then you got a second "lickin." I know that my brothers and sisters had to be really careful because my mom cooked for the nuns to help support sending us to school.

My fondest memories of growing up on the Eastside were that my parents allowed me to sell Grit Newspapers, Seattle PI's when I was 5 years old and later I also had a Montana Standard paper route. As I grew older, my parents eventually let me get my own shoe shine box and I used to go from the Eastside all the way to the Westside working my "trade" throughout all of the local watering holes. I established regular routes and continued to sell the Grit until my junior year at Butte Central (1976). The kids that I grew up on the west side (St. Pat's) with thought that there was something interesting about this kid who moved up to the neighborhood from Sacred Heart, as I had many business endeavors and came to be known as the "Artful Dodger," in that I developed many means of making money back in those days. Today they would call them "hustles." A group of us used to sing Christmas Carols in the bars and had kid who was extremely homely, who we would make go up and down the bar and this was a time when Butte was booming and had 200+ bars. The people felt so sorry for him, they often put money in his hat and when he came outside the bar, we'd take all the money, give him a dollar and start all over. I am not proud of that.

Additionally, my mom had some outdated Busy Bee Sewing Club raffle tickets and in 1969, I was busted selling them in the Monogram Barber Shop that was owned and operated by Don Hawkinson and Mick McGinnis, as the raffle printed on the ticket that had actually taken place in 1963. Being a young man, full of larceny, I was able to tell them that even though the date said 1963, it was an annual raffle and therefore it was a legal and legitimate raffle. This was not the truth and there was later a phone call to my mother and I paid dear price, but I tell you I made a lot of money selling those outdated raffle tickets. In those days, you were in competition with Steve Faulkner, Shoe Shine

John Mervicker and a number of other rascals who also had shoe shine routes, peddled papers, etc.

**Dan Thatcher:** Being a Butte Mining Town, what can you tell me about the strikes and organizations that happened in the community?

**Mike Thatcher:** Mining is what our heritage and culture is based on. At the turn of the century, Butte's population was over 100,000 and per capita, it was home to the largest Irish population in the country at that time and that included Boston, New York and some of the other much larger cities. Butte became a "melting pot" for all nationalities. There is great diversity – the Italians, Bohunks, an overwhelming presence of Irish in Dublin Gulch and primarily in the Centerville area of Butte. The year I was born, there was a very long strike, which lasted close to a year and a half. Many families were forced to leave Butte in order to find work. I was 8 years old in 1967 when another strike crippled Butte and I think that strike lasted 8-9 months. Things I remember about this is that my dad, even though he was on oxygen, hunting with a number of the neighbors and hanging poached deer for our families so that all of us could get by. One of the greatest memories I have while growing on East Granite Street was that neighborhoods took care of each other back in those days. There were neighborhood grocery stores, which carried people on credit. They were safe neighborhoods and you were always "busy," doing something, but this closeness is one of the things we have lost over time. The cohesiveness of these neighborhoods which was reflected in their parishes, schools, churches, grocery stores, taverns, fire stations, recreation centers is unfortunately a thing of the past.

When mining shut down in 1983, I was 24 years old and I had just left my job at Montana State Prison to go to work at the fledgling Butte Pre-Release Center. This was when Butte's unemployment rate was approximately 22%. What really makes this old mining camp so unique encompasses the architecture, the gallows frames and most importantly, our cultural influences and strong history not only in Montana but also in the United States. During the strikes, you had to deal with picket lines and scabs. Even as a boy of 8 or 9, I remember spam, noodles and mayonnaise sandwiches, however, there was good things too in that you were always gone from sun-up to sun-down. Many folks didn't have much of anything materialistic, however, I wouldn't trade my days spent growing up on the Eastside and Butte in general for anything.

In our house on the east side, I remember we had a high jump set up out back and basketball courts and that every kid in the neighborhood was out in the streets playing "kick the can," baseball, etc. There was not a night that went by that everyone knew that when the sirens from the mines went off, it was time to head home – otherwise you never spent any time in your house unless you were grounded. When I speak of the ethnic foods that are unique to Butte; they came from sources too numerous to mention, but the Welsh, the Irish, the English, the Serbs, the Croatians', the French, the Germans, the Italians, the Finns and the rest who immigrated to Butte from all over the world brought with them their traditional meals such as pasties, tamales, pork chop sandwiches, povitica, sarma, Chinese food, Italian cuisine, etc.

Butte was a true melting-pot. There was Dublin Gulch and Corktown for the Irish, the McQueen Addition for the Slavs, Meaderville for the Italians, Finn Town ( Butte's East Side) for those of Nordic descent, Williamsburg for the Germans. The uniqueness of Butte's architecture is everywhere you look. At one time, there were many tunnels that

connected many of the buildings – bars, businesses and brothels in Butte. Interestingly enough, Butte was booming as a mining town right up until the early 1980's. Butte operated many brothels with the most famous known as the Stockman Bar and the Dumas and several others where miners could literally go in one door and then come across Mercury Street and exit out in the middle of the night and nobody even knew that they had been there. These brothels remained opened until Sheriff Bob Butorovich closed them down in the early 1980's. The Stockman Bar was operated and owned by Jean Sorenson, who was definitely quite a character. Butte has known many, many colorful characters throughout its history and during my days I remember as "Tony the Trader," who ran a second hand store and billed himself as "Butte's living legend," Blind Frank, who ran a newsstand in uptown Butte, Luigi Jurenic and his one-man band, Stevie Faulkner, Johnny Mervicker, (both of whom who had shoeshine routes throughout Butte and vigorously defended their "turf). Legless Frank –who was a guy who sold pencils in front of Woolworths at the Pennsylvania block on Park Street in uptown Butte, the world famous Evel Knievel and as I mentioned, the infamous, "dirty-mouthed Jean" Sorenson, who was later sent to the women's prison for killing her husband and later in life – the late 1970's - she gunned down two patrons at the Stockman Bar – one of whom was enlisted in the military. I would be very remiss if I failed to mention a fellow that anyone who grew-up on the hill fondly remembers and this guy's name was Bronco Manovich (there is a true Butte name). Bronco managed the bowling alleys and pool hall at the original "Y" in uptown Butte and beginning as a kid and extending through my time in high school; we spent a lot of time hanging around the Y and spent a lot of time around Bronco. He provided me and many kids with many free memberships to the YMCA and he also hired me, my siblings and many friends to clean the bowling alleys and perform other chores that allowed us to keep some dough in our pockets. He could be a very gruff man, but at heart, he was dedicated to the youth of Butte and I am not the only one who fondly remembers the old YMCA and Bronco. These are just a few of the characters who roamed around Butte at that time. Another interesting point is that gambling was wide-open – Butte was actually called Little Vegas and today it is a poorly kept secret that there is more gambling occurring in Butte than there is anywhere else in the State of Montana.

Butte changed dramatically in that while I was growing up, there were bars located in virtually every neighborhood, on about every corner, and I believe at one time, there was close to 200 bars in Butte – give or take a few. Most of these joints operated 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Even today in 2011, if you know how to play your cards right and are politically connected, you can still find a tavern that will stay open past the 2 am curfew.

Other things we did, while growing up on the Eastside, is we played in the mine yards and the mine waste. We used to catch pigeons in the gallows frames and sell them to Danny Wong at the Pekin for \$.25 a pigeon. When my family re-located to the Westside, we spent many a day riding our bikes out behind Montana Tech, to what was known then as Green Lake, which was a settling pond. We called it Green Lake because that is what its color was – and the color came from the copper, arsenic and many other heavy metals that were in the water. Quite interesting, I have told you, Dan, the reason that many of us in the Clan Thatcher have such large melons (heads) is the product of either the Butte curse or all those years of swimming in Green Lake. We used to call it

the bottomless lake, as we lost several bikes riding into Green Lake and nobody was ever able to swim and find the bottom.

Growing up on East Granite and Park Streets, the grandest asset Butte had was the Columbia Gardens. I will always believe that the greatest travesty is that my kids and grandkids will never have the opportunity to spend time at the incredible and fabulous Columbia Gardens. I remember being able to go up for Miner's Union Day by catching the bus ride for a nickel there and spending many a summer day walking the creek, going on hikes, picnics, watching/playing baseball games and enjoying riding the rollercoaster, the merry-go-round and the bi-planes. The Columbia Gardens, which was often referred to as the "jewel of the Rockies" closed in 1973. A number of mysterious fires occurred shortly after its closure and the greatest tragedy of all was when all of the majestic buildings of the Columbia Gardens burned down. Some of the pieces of the Gardens were relocated to the Beef Trail area and Clark's Park, where the "cowboy swings" - where any kid that went to the Gardens spent countless hours riding - are now located. I believe the Columbia Gardens was the most fabulous park for families growing up in Butte, Montana.

Dan, I could spend a great deal of time talking to you about the Catholic schools, but unfortunately in 1967, I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Pat's when the closure of the Catholic schools was announced. In 1968, I transferred to the McKinley School, which was close to our Park Street home and I attended 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade there. These were also incredible years of my life. I was able to play basketball and I continued to roam the streets where quite a few rackets were always going on. The Diocese of Helena did open two Catholic Junior High Schools -North (the old Immaculate Conception grade school) and South Central (at the old St. Ann's school), so during 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I attended North Central; however, a number of my buddies transferred to West Junior High School, on the lower west side. The uniqueness back in those days was that there were separate Catholic high schools. Boys went to Boys Central and the girls went to Girl's Central - which is Butte Central now. When I entered my freshman year of high school, it was a co-ed school. Butte Central had better than 600 students. I graduated in 1977 with a class of about 185 kids. When you think about some of the biggest changes I have seen occur over my lifetime, it is watching you graduate as part of a class of 42, when Central's total student population approximated 130 kids. This clearly demonstrates that Butte's population has declined, but the importance of and emphasis on Catholic education has also changed.

When I attended high school, I had worked as a janitor all 4 of my high school years and I was only allowed to participate in high school basketball my sophomore, junior and senior years. I had to pay for my tuition as I came from a big family. I also took a job during my junior and senior years working for Sandy Keith at the old Acoma Lounge. I washed dishes and waited tables. These are experiences that I wouldn't trade for anything in the world. I believe the education I received from the Christian Brothers and Nuns was phenomenal! Every kick in the pants and slap upside the head that I received was well deserved.

In looking back at my years in junior high and at Butte Central High School and all of the mischief I got in, I was truly a young man who needed all of the corrective discipline that could be handed out. It was ironic that I was recently the recipient of a very distinguished award from Butte Central. I want to mention that Brother Ford and Sister Anita were two of my favorite teachers, but at other times, they offered me their

opinions that one day I would be one of the youngest guys ever sent to Montana State Prison. They would be greatly surprised to find out that I was recently recognized by Butte Central for turning into a devoted family man, who takes a great deal of pride in my Catholic education and community – quite ironic!

**Dan Thatcher:** What is most important to the people in the community of Butte? How has the community changed within your lifetime, as far as its physical appearance is concerned? Population? Schools? Work Available? Wages? Integration of classes, races, etc?

**Mike Thatcher:** As I mentioned earlier, there was such neighborhood diversity and there were so many celebrations. There were picnics, whether you lived in Walkerville, McQueen, Centerville, etc. There was the huge Miner's Union Day and neighborhoods really were neighborhoods. You had close to a dozen Catholic parishes and schools that had fairly large student populations. You had numerous Fraternal Organizations inclusive of the Eagles, Lions Club, the Moose Club, the Lebanese Lodge, the Knights of Columbus, the Elks, the Masonic Lodge, etc. There were a number of other community groups that reflected the strong and various ethnic backgrounds in Butte such as the Hibernians, Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Odd Fellows, etc. The Irish really had strong political affiliations and influence back in those days. One of the changes that I witnessed back in 1977 was when the County of Silver Bow and the City of Butte became the first consolidated government in the State of Montana. Before the consolidation, Butte was governed by a mayor who worked with 12 Aldermen. Silver Bow County had 3 County Commissioners. There was a separate Sheriff's Department and Police Department. The Butte Police Department later became infamous for being basically crooks with badges and their escapades were documented in a book that hit Butte several years ago titled *The Bad Boys of Butte*. There were allegations that a number of Butte cops may have had direct involvement – a lot of times while on-duty - in various criminal enterprises in Butte. I will leave that story to other historians.

Butte had a ton of political power, both locally and in Montana. One of the most interesting things back at that time is that the Butte political delegation (in cooperation with the rest of southwest Montana) garnered the power to get the Interstate Highway System – both I-15 (north and south) and I-90 (east and west) ran through or close to Butte. As a result, Butte is one of the few cities in the United States that has these north-south, east-west corridors in such close proximity. The great Copper Kings, such as Marcus Daly and William A. Clark, who was later a United States Senator from Montana, date all the way back to uptown Butte where the copper and the mines were, which led to the cohesive and political power that Butte enjoyed for many years, much to the chagrin of many of our community neighbors.

Butte has always possessed a "can do it" attitude, even when it regularly faced incredibly insurmountable odds, such as the strikes, mine closures, etc. The physical appearance of Butte has changed tremendously in that many of the old neighborhoods such as Meaderville, McQueen, the East Side, and Finn Town are now buried in the Berkley Pit. The pit was our economic engine, but as it expanded, it consumed neighborhoods that were full of ethnic pride and strong traditions. Butte has been undergoing constant forms of remediation that are the product of well over one-hundred



years of mining. Butte is old and dirty, but don't let anybody from out of town tell us that. Them are fightin' words.

I think one of the greatest disappointments Butte faces is that many of us never received, nor have subsequently acted as responsible stewards in passing on our immense community history to our children and grandchildren. Butte's population has decreased. Many of our public schools and Catholic schools closed. Employment opportunities have diminished. Mining did eventually return to Butte when Billionaire Dennis Washington of Missoula had the huge trucks start hauling copper out of the Continental East open-pit mine. The decision made by the Anaconda Company back in the 1980's to shut-off the pumps and allow the underground mines; to flood was, I believe, a decision that will always be regretted. A lot of invaluable history has been lost under the water! Back in the days, when Butte's mines were booming, it was easy to find a job. Kids getting out of high school could go always go down the mines and work underground, make a decent living and take great pride in the product of their hard work.

Again, one of the most terrible tragedies that affected Butte through the years is that we lost our neighborhoods, where kids played whiffle ball, kick-the-can, tag, "bonking cars" in the winter hide and go seek, etc. Kids were always, *always* doing something outside. Baseball, football, ice skating as there were a lot of rinks throughout Butte years ago. Kids, at Christmas time gathering Christmas Trees and bringing them to the rinks, building "forts" and then starting big bonfires. Growing up in Butte, participating in athletics was a strong tradition. Look at the history that details greatest coaches, of national note, that have come out of Butte, because of their passion for athletics –Swede Dahlberg, Sonny Lubick, Mick Dennehy, Sonny Holland, Sam Jankovich, Jim Sweeney, to name just a few of them. Sports was in the bloodline of Butte!

The rivalry between Butte High and Butte Central while I was growing up was intense. I believe our Butte Central Class of 1977 was one of the last classes where there was such a bitter rivalry between Butte High and Butte Central and it was not uncommon for many fights to occur on a weekend to weekend basis. However, that was one thing, but the Good Lord forbid if any of the Anaconda guys come to Butte wanting to fight a Butte High or Central kid, then it became BH/BC pitted against the Copperheads from Anaconda.

Butte has been long-noted for speed skating i.e. the Olympic skater, Dr. Dave Silk, who is currently an Emergency Room physician at St. James Healthcare. A lot of kids spent countless hours on the rinks around town dressed out in their old hockey skates or their fancy speed skates. Our love of speed skating contributed greatly to the construction of the High Altitude Sports Center. Clark's Park was notorious for speed skating. Softball was huge in Butte – it was a hotbed for the sport - as, at one time, there were easily several hundred softball teams in Butte, with weekend tournaments occurring throughout the summer at Clark's Park, the Stodden complex and every vacant field where chalk lines could be laid down. Sadly, I must say now, I believe there are only 1-2 tournaments per year and the local Recreation Leagues are lucky to muster 10 teams in the Butte district.

Butte was also famous for producing some outstanding bowlers and had many boxing clubs and I believe to this day that every kid in Butte took a couple years of boxing because you knew you had to learn to defend yourself because there were so

many tough kids in every neighborhood. I think these are some of the things that are lacking in today's kids. I don't think that today's generation are as physically or mentally tough because parents were not involved in "going to bat" for their kids for sporting events. As a matter of fact, most parents could not make to any events, because they were working their shifts in the mines. There were so many great things going. The CYO Leagues, pick-up, sandlot football games. There was the Industrial Baseball Leagues that produced many talented baseball players, who either played collegiately or could have gone on to a higher level. All of these things are gone.

Many phrases are used in Butte today such as "youse guys," "tap er light," "how she goin." All can be attributed to our mining heritage and history. Butte will be always be the diamond in the rough and I can think of no better place to have been raised and to raise my own kids.

One other tradition that has always been interesting in Butte, is the way we honor our dead or those who have experienced hardship. It was not uncommon for wakes to last several days and even today many people, upon the conclusion of a wake or funeral, have a healthy celebration at one of the local athletic clubs and/or taverns to pay respect to the deceased and to celebrate their life.

Butte has always had a strong reputation of taking care of our own and that does, in fact, continue today, when people face health issues, economic hardships, etc. This community is always willing to step up and I do not believe this happens as frequently anywhere in Montana and I am not so sure anywhere else in the country. I can tell you that Butte is a diversified community and there are no racial overtones or definition of classes or races. There is no such thing as being concerned with color, as I believe we have all been raised to be colorblind – definitely not a bad thing.

I got married in 1981 and will shortly have been wed to your mom for 30 years. I met her in high school. She has worked in the banking industry for 32 years and I have worked in corrections for 30 years. We originally lived in a house in Centerville and our rent was \$150.00 a month. I made \$13,000 per year, she made \$3.00 an hour and we thought we were filthy rich. We eventually purchased a house at 514 South Jackson and moved into our current home 2921 Quincy, where we have resided for 15 years.

Having been raised without a father, as my dad died on October 15, 1969, I grew up being somewhat bitter in that I did not have a father who came to my games. I used to get angry when I saw kids get rides to the Bonanza Freeze and/or Dairy Queen. Many of the kids I ran around with either came from single-parent houses, through divorce or deaths and we seemed to attach to each other – Gary Mellville, Jim Prendergast (whose father was killed in an accident in the Berkley Pit) and number of other kids that did not have a father. My mom, Eileen, who will forever be the greatest heroine in my life, did one hell of a job paying attention in giving all of us the love and attention that was crucial in molding me into the person I have become today. Because my dad had died when I was so young, losing my mother at age 82 on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004 when I was 45 was very emotionally draining and trying for me. I was a momma's boy and very proud of it as I miss mom everyday. My mother was both the patriarch and matriarch of our family. How she raised 7 kids on an LPN's income is well beyond my wildest imagination. Again, we never went without. She would have garage sales, sell baked goods and do anything for all of her life's energies, love and decisions were about her children and the good of her family. Being a single mother, she worked at the Pekin for Danny Wong,

went back to nursing school to get her LPN degree and retired from St. James Hospital. It is pretty incredible when you are a single mother with 7 kids and able to raise them, go to school and hold a full-time job (actually several jobs). It is pretty obvious, I was very close to your grandmother and I believe I inherited some of her qualities, but I only hope that when I pass, my kids will have the same feeling for me as I had for my mother. There is nobody more important in my life than my brothers and sisters, my relative and especially my dear children, grandchildren and my remarkable wife.

In closing, I love Butte, Montana. I love how it smells, how it looks, how it tastes! I love the people and I am ferociously loyal and anybody is critical – those to me are fighting words. I am grateful that my parents settled in Butte, Montana. It has allowed me and my children to enjoy a great life. Home will always be Butte. I had a college professor at Montana State University (my alma mater) that told me in one of his classes that everybody moves at least 10 times in their life. Being the general pain in the ass that I am, I challenged him and told him that is not necessarily true. Where I am from, Butte, Montana, you moved maybe twice. Once is away from Butte and the other is coming back. Butte will always be my home and for that I am grateful. I only wish that my children will have a greater opportunity to learn about what a wonderful environment, culture and community good ole' Butte has been. I hope and pray that they get the opportunity to hopefully someday raise their children and continue our roots – future generations of the proud Thatcher Family.

**Dan Thatcher:** Dad, I just want to take a second and tell you thanks for doing this interview with me. It means a lot to me and that concludes this interview. Thank you.