



SUNDAY POST-DISPATCH

She saved a million, then gave it all away



ELIE GARDNER • egardner@post-dispatch.com

A photograph of Jane M. Buri is displayed at her cousin Jack Goettelmann's home in Ballwin. Buri worked as a social worker for St. Louis Public Schools for decades.

Longtime social worker clipped coupons, drove an old car, and died with \$1.4 million – which she left for others.

Learn about Buri's life through the thoughts of those who knew her. STLtoday.com/video

BY DAVID HUNN • dhunn@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8411

ST. LOUIS • Jane M. Buri, a public school social worker, spent nearly four decades fighting to keep kids in class.

She tracked students to their homes, found them shoes, meals, jackets, and returned the truants to their teachers. She never married, never had children, never missed a day of work.

All the while, she was quietly building a small fortune. Buri died at 84 with \$1.4 million to her name.

Then in death, as befitted her life, she gave it all away. The last checks from her savings – willed to more than 50 friends, cousins and charities –

should be arriving soon in mailboxes.

She gave to African missionaries, Legionaries of Christ and Catholic schools for the Sioux and Cheyenne. She donated to her high school, college and graduate school, to the south St. Louis parish she visited thrice weekly, the Alexian Brothers nursing home where she volunteered, and the disabled friend she took to the discount grocery store every Friday.

How did she amass such an estate?

"It beats me," said old friend and co-worker

See BURI • Page A12

The Staley Dozen

Trying Times • Economic downturn has brought little change to the lifestyle of Winfield family with 12 children.



DAWN MAJORS • dmajors@post-dispatch.com

Janie Staley (center) talks with daughter Sadie (right) about homework after school on Monday evening. Janie and Matthew Staley of Winfield have 12 children, 10 of whom live at home.

Online • Watch an audio slideshow of the Staley family. STLtoday.com/multimedia

BY JOE HOLLEMAN • jholleman@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8254

In this corner: Matthew and Janie Staley of Winfield, parents of 12. In the other corner: Name brand groceries, slickly packaged.

The groceries never stood a chance. "People talk about feeling like they're at the end of their rope financially," Matthew said with a laugh. "We always live at the end of the rope."

Matthew manages Hechler's Hearth & Home store in Troy, Mo. Janie holds down the fort on five acres that her 93-year-old grandmother gave them – back when they had only seven children.

At the Staley household, frugality is a given. The economic downturn has

Trying Times is an occasional series about how people in our region are living with the recession.

brought little visible change in their lifestyle, which always has been long on togetherness and short on discretionary spending.

Ten of the Staley kids still live at home; the youngest is 4, the oldest is 19.

Watching them navigate Costco in St. Peters is like witnessing a military strike: plan, focus, execution. There was little chitchat, other than to reassure 5-year-old Hope she could buy something later at Dollar General.

Forty-five minutes and \$208 later, the Staleys loaded up their van: eight loaves of bread; two bags of frozen corn the size of throw pillows; 22 pounds of frozen beef; a 24-roll raft of toilet paper; a half-gallon of soy sauce. Then it was off to the nearby Aldi's. In just under 20 minutes and just over \$76, the Staleys headed home – but not before the Dollar General stop, where Hope bought a bottle of soap bubbles as her treat.

Sitting at their kitchen table, the Staleys explained how they manage to raise 12 children at a time when having four kids is considered a "big" family. (They also

See STALEYS • Page A12

Thaw seems near for U.S., Cuba

Life is meager in Havana, liberties are few, and many seem thirsty for change.

BY ADAM JADHAV

ajadhav@post-dispatch.com > 314-809-9423

HAVANA • Juan, a 30-something Cuban artist, makes less than \$20 a month from a state-fixed salary drawing graphic novels for children; he readily pulls a sample comic from his briefcase to show off his work.

But more precious than those comics is another piece of paper he pulls from his black leather bag: a form to enter the government's annual *sorteo* – a raffle – for a passport and permission to emigrate to the United States.

"I want to go. I want to make a change for myself. There is no opportunity here for me," said Juan, who like most other Cubans fears being identified by his full name because of possible government retribution for talking to foreign journalists. "We have no future."

For 50 years, Cuba's 11 million people have endured poverty under the communist regime of Fidel Castro and, more recently, his brother Raul Castro. For nearly all of that time, the U.S. has also maintained a tight economic embargo and barred nearly all of its own citizens from traveling to Cuba.

Yet the movement in Washington to ease some

See CUBA • Page A13

MAKING MOVIE MAGIC AT HOME



Michael Beugg is back in St. Louis, his hometown, where the one-time White House aide is working as executive producer on the new George Clooney movie "Up in the Air." **A&E • E1**

DEFENSE CUTS WILL COST US

In his defense budget proposal, Robert Gates took aim at Boeing, seeking a slashing of production of the St. Louis-built F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter by as much as one-third. **BUSINESS • D1**

WHAT DO THEY EARN?

Some St. Louisans are featured in Parade's annual "What People Earn" edition.



CHRIS LEE • clee@post-dispatch.com

BLUES HITTING THE RIGHT NOTES AGAIN

Blues center David Backes signs a jersey for Joe Donato, 9, of Sunset Hills, at the Scottrade Center in St. Louis. Three years into new ownership, the franchise has gone from struggling before empty seats to making the playoffs – and reconnecting with the fans.

SPORTS • C1



WEATHER • TODAY 59° • TONIGHT 51° • TOMORROW 57° • FORECAST A22

SO MUCH FOR YOUR FAMILY TO DO, YOU'LL ROOT FOR EXTRA INNINGS.



- FREE HOT DOG AND SODA WITH RESERVED SEATS
- KIDS RUN THE BASES POSTGAME
- KIDS GET A FREE TICKET TO ANOTHER 2009 GAME
- FREE ICE CREAM PREGAME IN THE FORD PLAZA

RAWLINGS RYAN LUDWICK BAT DAY
TODAY
VS. HOUSTON, 1:15PM



ALL KIDS 15 & UNDER

FAMILY OF FOUR TICKETS
START AT JUST \$46

stlcardinals.com

DIGEST

POWs get benefits but aren't on record

There are only 21 surviving POWs from the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the Department of Defense says. Yet the Department of Veterans Affairs is paying disability benefits to 286 service members it says were taken prisoner during that conflict, according to data released by VA to The Associated Press.

A similar discrepancy arises with Vietnam POWs. Only 661 officially recognized prisoners returned from that war alive — and about 100 of those have since died, according to Pentagon figures. But 966 purported Vietnam POWs are getting disability payments, the VA told AP.

Fallujah game is criticized

• A North Carolina company that plans to release a video game about one of the Iraq war's bloodiest battles is running into a buzz saw of criticism. The game, "Six Days in Fallujah," is being made with the help of Marines who fought in the battle. It has hit a nerve because U.S. soldiers are still dying in Iraq — on Friday, five soldiers were killed.

ASU tries to make it up to Obama

• Stung by criticism of its decision not to award President Barack Obama an honorary degree when he makes a commencement address next month, Arizona State University announced Saturday it will rename a scholarship program for the president. ASU said at first that Obama had not been in his position long enough to amass the body of work required for an honorary degree, then that the university has a policy of not awarding honorary degrees to sitting politicians.

Retired priest drives into parishioners

• A retired priest drove into a group of churchgoers after helping at a Good Friday service in Forest Hills, Pa., killing an elderly woman and injuring four other people. "He told me the accelerator of his car went on its own and he could not stop the car," parishioner Angela Thomas said. "He's just devastated."

Ex-cop kills himself

• Police say an ex-New York City police officer shot himself to death on his lawn after shooting an off-duty officer he thought was having an affair with his wife, also an officer. Cecil Ramsay, 51, fired into a car carrying his wife and a fellow officer, wounding the man in the hand, then killed himself, police said.

14 children, 13 women, zero support

• Authorities in Flint, Mich., say a man fathered 14 children with 13 women and owes more than \$530,000 in unpaid child support. Thomas Frazier, 42, was jailed. Court records say he owes six years of support payments. He is unemployed.

Tubal ligations outnumber vasectomies

• Despite the cost, time and aggravation involved, about 1 million women in this country get tubal ligations each year — twice the estimated number of men who get vasectomies.

Two too drunk

• Police in Racine, Wis., say a drunken driver hit another drunken driver at 2:40 a.m. Saturday. No one was seriously injured.

Good Friday gone wild

• A Philadelphia cable network's broadcast of a Good Friday service at the Vatican abruptly changed at 2 a.m. to something wildly different — a 30-second "Girls Gone Wild" ad. One person called to complain.

Up a creek

• Washington state environmental regulators say they've finally found the source of pollution that has been fouling a creek near Vancouver Lake: the agency's own sewer pipes.

Playing chicken-tac-toe

• Ex-boxing champ Thomas "Hitman" Hearns matched wits with a chicken in a battle of tic-tac-toe at the Greektown Casino in Detroit. Hearns won one round. Another ended in a tie.

From news services

Havana has been stuck in a time warp of poverty

BY ADAM JADHAV • ajadhav@post-dispatch.com > 314-809-9423

HAVANA • Eddie, a stout Cuban man, pulls a set of wrenches from the trunk of his dented blue Ford and goes to work under the hood. He pounds at the behemoth of an automobile for a while, then gets behind the wheel and turns the keys.

The car sputters and rumbles to life. "It's from 1954," he says smiling.

The old Fords and Chevys that crowd the streets of Cuba's capital city are vestiges of a time before the U.S. stopped nearly all trade with Cuba. Some of the cars are in immaculate condition; some require daily tune-ups just to start. Most other American products — with the exception of ubiquitous Coca-Cola — can't be found at all.

Stepping into the worn Habana Centro neighborhood feels like walking back into the mid-1900s. Colonial-era buildings about the streets, crumbling from lack of repair; the buildings are beautiful inside — high ceilings and interior courtyards — yet sparsely furnished because many

Cuban families simply have few possessions.

Much of Cuba remains in this time warp because of its poor economy, stunted by both the decades-old embargo as well as its communist government. The country has routinely had to rely on cash and commodity donations from foreign benefactors: the former Soviet Union during the Cold War and Hugo Chávez in Venezuela today.

The government still controls most consumer business, limiting selection in stores. Average Cubans also require but are rarely given permission to buy a car or a home. They've only recently been allowed to buy appliances and electronics such as DVD players and rice cookers.

And many Cubans don't have the money for such luxuries anyway.

They while away their evenings in their living rooms with doors left open to the street. Old men smoke cigars and play dominoes; children play baseball in the street with sticks and rubber

balls and no gloves.

Life in Havana contains many contradictions. The country generally doesn't have the abject poverty found in other parts of the developing world, but Cubans still have little economic power because the government fixes most salaries at an average of \$20 a month.

Odales, who works behind the counter at a cigar bar in Havana, said she attended the University of Havana and spent five years working with computers in the 1990s. Her new job pays the same — about \$18 a month — and at least she can get tips from foreigners.

"People come here and say, 'Cubans are so poor.' But for Cubans, this is normal because there are not many rich people in Cuba," she said.

Odales said people are comfortable, they just have low expectations and little means to move up.

And while the United Nations says Cuba's life expectancy equals that of the U.S. and its adult lit-

eracy rate is second-best in the world, lines still form outside food ration shops, restaurants often can't make everything on their menus due to shortages and black market clothes are illegally sold from suitcases in random living rooms.

Even as the country brings in money from medical tourism and supplies doctors to Africa, Cubans say they face shortages of supplies and physicians at their own hospitals.

Another sign of the desperation: hustlers and hookers routinely work tourist hangouts hawking cigars or sex.

Cuba has modern buses for public transportation, yet farmers still drive horse-drawn wagons along highways outside the city, to bring their goods to town.

"Ideology has been the determining factor in the Cuban economy," said Lisandro Pérez, a Cuban-American and Florida International University professor, "and it's an ideology that's allergic to the notion of people getting rich."

CUBA • FROM A1

Obama is expected this week to lift restrictions on Cuban-Americans visiting and sending money to family



ADAM JADHAV • ajadhav@post-dispatch.com

Children play baseball on a side street in Habana Centro, a worn neighborhood of downtown Havana. Cubans have little access to luxury and entertainment goods, but the country has an obsession with baseball; kids and adults alike play games in streets, in empty lots and in parks.

of those prohibitions is perhaps stronger than ever. President Barack Obama has said he intends to re-evaluate U.S.-Cuban relations and is expected this week to lift restrictions on Cuban-Americans visiting and sending money to family on the island.

At the same time, analysts say Raul Castro, who replaced his ailing brother last year as the communist nation's president, may be open to more economic freedoms.

Meanwhile, many in Congress — including key members of the Missouri and Illinois delegation — are seeking to allow ordinary Americans to visit Cuba. This, of course, also has American businesses, particularly farmers and agriculture companies in the Midwest, salivating at Cuba's trade potential.

"Everything does seem to be lining up for some kind of change," said Lisandro Pérez, a Cuban immigrant and expert on the country at Florida International University in Miami. "There's generally a belief that the new administration and this Congress is going to be more open about Cuba and more pragmatic about Cuba."

DECADES OF EMBARGO

Many Cubans, like Juan, have never known life without the *bloqueo*, the blockade, as Cubans refer to U.S. embargo. The U.S. has maintained a ban on trade with Cuba since the 1960s, when Fidel Castro began to nationalize property and eventually took the side of the former Soviet Union.

The Cuban government regularly reminds its people of the trade rules. Billboards throughout Havana decry U.S. policy as the cause of Cuba's hardships.

But Washington blames Cuba's poverty on its own government. Under the communist regime, most jobs are actually state positions — from restaurant waiter to hospital doctor. The government fixes wages for nearly all professions, paying an average of \$20 a month, according to most estimates.

Capitalism, consumerism and

the free market are rejected in favor of socialism; in Cuba, the government attempts to be the sole provider of such basics as housing, food, education, health care and employment.

"I have housing, but the government pays very little," said Julio, who sells sandwiches at the Estadio Latinoamericano — Havana's main baseball stadium. "We can't afford much."

At the stadium after a game, thousands of Cubans pack buses outside or simply walk; very few have vehicles. Taxis are nowhere to be seen.

"Cubans don't even have money for taxis," Julio said.

THE COMMUNIST REGIME

Living conditions are meager, and activists say that civil rights are nearly nonexistent. Political candidates must be approved by the Communist Party; opposition political parties are banned; the state-run press gives only the government's viewpoint; Cuban police hassle or jail anyone suspected of dissension; and neighborhood associations report suspicious or anti-communist behavior.

Many Cubans worry about being caught saying anything negative. Juan immediately stopped talking to a reporter as police approached.

Yet, Raul Castro has at least talked of easing some restrictions. Some farmers are being given permission to use fallow government land. And last year, Castro lifted bans on Cubans owning mobile phones or visiting tourist hotels.

Some analysts see those changes as window dressing, given that neither a room at the prestigious Hotel Nacional de Cuba nor cellular service is affordable for most Cubans.

"The Cuban government has been pretty good at maintaining its authoritarian regime," said Brian Latell, a former CIA analyst and Cuba expert at the University of Miami. "Regardless of what the U.S. has done, the government there still controls most aspects of life."

FAILED POLICIES

Yet there is growing agreement in Washington that the embargo and travel restrictions have failed to dent the communist regime. Furthermore, analysts say, U.S. policy acts as a handy excuse for the Castros' failings.

Obama is expected to lift all restrictions on Cuban-American travel and remittances to the island before he heads next weekend to a meeting in Trinidad and Tobago. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, including Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Kansas City, met with Fidel and Raul Castro earlier this month.

Latell predicts diplomatic talks could happen between the two governments this year.

Efforts to lift restrictions on Cuba have failed in the past because of thorny issues ranging from human rights concerns to compensation for Americans whose property was nationalized after the 1959 revolution. And staunch opposition remains from some Cuban-American legislators who believe lifting restrictions only rewards the Castro regime. Only last month, Sen. Mel Martinez, R-Fla., again condemned the Cuban government while opposing a budget provision loosening agricultural trade rules.

But with the Obama administration taking an open stance, many members of Congress, ranging from Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., to Rep. Jo Ann Emerson, R-Mo., see hope for, at the very least, ending the travel ban.

Both Missouri senators, Republican Christopher "Kit" Bond and Democrat Claire McCaskill, say they support a Senate bill to allow free travel as a way to build relationships for business and pressure the Castro government to make changes of its own.

"It is past time to engage," Bond said in a statement. "While I support restoring commercial trade, exposing Cuban people to American travel is an important first step."

Tourism dollars would be an obvious economic boon, but in the Midwest, the farm lobby also

touts Cuba as a potential trading partner. Richer Daniels Midland, in Decatur, Ill., and some other U.S. companies already do limited business with Cuba despite stiff restrictions. Researchers at Texas A&M University say the farmers miss out on more than \$1 billion in agricultural exports annually because of the embargo.

"There is tremendous potential for Midwest agriculture in particular," said Rich Guebert, a Randolph County farmer and vice president of the Illinois Farm Bureau, who traveled to Cuba last month on a fact-finding trip. "It's clear, they need us."

But analysts say even if the United States relaxes restrictions, it's not clear that the Castro government would follow suit. Some Cubans in Havana also remain skeptical.

"The blockade — *el bloqueo* — that is the name of a game, a game between governments," said Antonio, a promoter for an art co-op in Havana. "It is one of the things helping to keep Cuba poor, but if it lifts tomorrow, that does nothing about the situation of the country. It doesn't change any of the rules we face here."

Cubans are generally friendly with Americans, though many still have hard feelings about years of U.S. restrictions.

When asked their opinion of American policy, four Cuban men playing dominoes in downtown Havana broke into laughter and gave a thumbs-down. At the Museo de la Revolución, a former presidential palace-turned-museum dedicated to the Castro-led revolution, tour guides call the U.S. government an imperialist occupier.

Yet, Barack Obama's campaign slogan, "Yes, we can" — in Spanish, "Sí, Se Puede" — is painted on some walls in Havana.

"Obama, to Cuban people, is our, how do you say, our hope," said Iván, a computer programmer whose family rents rooms in Havana. "We believe he wants to lift restrictions on Cuba. To Cubans, he is a very good *presidente*."