

## Stefanie Büchenbacher (Steffie Pullis Baker)

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After receiving her degree in Medicine in Florence, Stefanie Büchenbacher emigrated to Bolivia with her mother and then to the United States in 1945. There, she set out to have her accomplishments recognized, which concluded in permanent residency in 1948.

Stefanie was born in 1912 in the Bavarian city of Fürth, to Simon, who was a merchant, and Lucie Mailänder<sup>1</sup>. She graduated from the vocational school Oberreal-schule of Fürth and was enrolled in the medical school of the University of Munich for the 1932-33 academic year. The following year, she transferred to the University of Florence, likely deciding to emigrate due to the worsening political climate in Germany. In accordance with orders originating from the Ministry of National Education in 1932,<sup>2</sup> her request was reviewed by the Direzione generale degli italiani all'estero (Committee for Italians abroad) and forwarded to the Foreign Ministry. The Fascist regulations had been instituted to restrict the entry of foreign students to those who would be considered politically reliable<sup>3</sup>.

After 1935, Stefanie became a stateless person as a consequence of the Nuremberg laws, which revoked her German citizenship<sup>4</sup>.

She graduated on 11 July 1938 with a grade of 107/110<sup>5</sup>. The subject of her thesis was «L'ipervitaminosi A nei suoi riflessi metabolici ed ematologici»,

1 ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Buchenbacher [sic] Steffie», enrolment form, a.y. 1933-34. On the form, which was compiled in 1933, the young woman described her father as a «former store-keeper».

2 Ministerial circular no. 13119, 12 August 1932. Cf. E. Signori, *Una «peregrinatio academica» in età contemporanea. Gli studenti ebrei stranieri nelle università italiane tra le due guerre*, «Annali di storia delle università italiane», 4, 2000, pp. 139-162.

3 ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Buchenbacher [sic] Steffie», MAE, Direzione generale italiani all'estero to Università degli studi di Firenze, Facoltà di Medicina e Chirurgia, 3 October 1933.

4 NARA, Collection of Foreign Records Seized, *Name Index of Jews Whose German Nationality Was Annulled by the Nazi Regime (Berlin Documents Center)*, T355, Roll 2, *ad nomen* (available online at <<https://www.ancestry.com>>).

5 ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Buchenbacher [sic] Steffie», Università degli studi di Firenze, Facoltà di Medicina e chirurgia, oral proceedings of the matriculation exam, 11 July 1938.

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under the direction of Pio Bastai, a professor of Clinical pathology and a productive and original scientist<sup>6</sup>. On 13 July, Stefanie applied for an apprenticeship at the University obstetric clinic in Turin and later at the Fatebenefratelli clinic in Milan<sup>7</sup>. She was presumably able to complete her internship, even though the relevant documents are not available.

From Italy, Stefanie traveled to La Paz, Bolivia with her mother Lucie, who was now widowed. After working for a year in a private practice, she obtained a government position and dedicated herself to research on the prevention and cure of tropical diseases<sup>8</sup>. From there, mother and daughter left again on 27 November 1945, traveling from Buenos Aires on the ship Rio Jachal and arriving in New York City on 23 December<sup>9</sup>. For their place of residence, the two women provided the address of Stefanie's older brother Hans, who lived in New York and had anglicized his last name to Baker. When they applied for naturalization papers, they adopted Hans' last name. In New York, Stefanie worked for a year as an internist at Bronx Hospital, and for ten months at Flushing Hospital. On 26 June 1947, she obtained her license to practice medicine and surgery<sup>10</sup>.

In autumn of 1948, she moved to the town of Hartwick in New York State, where she began to practice general medicine and pediatrics and accepted the position of Health Officer<sup>11</sup>. She quickly became known in the local community, thanks to her participation in numerous philanthropic activities<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> On Bastai cf. the entry by E. Ferrario in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 34, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1988 (available online at <<http://www.treccani.it>>, accessed 31 March 2019).

<sup>7</sup> ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Buchenbacher [sic] Steffie», request to the rector of Università degli studi di Firenze, 13 July 1938.

<sup>8</sup> *Steffie Pullis Baker*, «The Daily Star» 4 February 1999, available online at <<https://www.ancestry.com>> (accessed 31 March 2019).

<sup>9</sup> National Archives at Washington (DC), Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Passengers and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, NY, 1897-1957*, T715, Roll 7042, ad nomen (available online at <<https://www.ancestry.com>>).

<sup>10</sup> *Steffie Pullis Baker*, cit.

<sup>11</sup> *Hartwick Briefs*, «Oneonta Star», 14 October 1948, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. e.g. *Health Clinic Set*, «Oneonta Star», 17 December 1953, p. 2; *Start of Otsego Program. Hartwick, Morris to Give Free Polio Shots*, «Oneonta Star», 19 February 1957, p. 3; Hartwick Open House, «Oneonta Star», 4 December 1962, p. 6.

In 1968, on the twentieth anniversary of her arrival in the community, she was honored in a public ceremony. Ten years later, she was again honored by the Hartwick Business Association.

Sefanie retired in 1980, and two years later married Francis Edward Pullis<sup>13</sup>. She died in Hartwick on 2 February 1999<sup>14</sup>. A meeting room at the local Fire Hall was dedicated to her.

### Major publications

- Thesis «L'ipervitaminosi A nei suoi riflessi metabolici ed ematologici», Università degli studi di Firenze, Facoltà di Medicina e Chirurgia, a.y. 1937-38.

### Archival sources

- ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Büchenbacher [sic] Steffie».
- NARA, Collection of Foreign Records Seized, *Name Index of Jews Whose German Nationality Was Annulled by the Nazi Regime* (Berlin Documents Center), T355, Roll 2, *ad nomen* (available online at <<https://www.ancestry.com>>).
- National Archives in Washington (DC), Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Passengers and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving in New York*, New York, 1897-1957, T715, Roll 7042, *ad nomen* (available online at <<https://www.ancestry.com>>).
- *U.S. Obituary Collection, 1930-2018*, «Steffie Pullis Baker» (available online at <<https://www.ancestry.com>>).
- *Hartwick Briefs*, «Oneonta Star», 14 October 1948, p. 8.

### Bibliography

- Town of Hartwick Historical Society, *Hartwick. The Heart of Otsego*

<sup>13</sup> Town of Hartwick Historical Society, *Hartwick. The Heart of Otsego County*, NY, Hartwick, Syllable Press, 2002, pp. 309-310.

<sup>14</sup> *Steffie Pullis Baker*, cit.

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