

BEYOND *the* LAW

ALLAN LOBOZZO



Beyond The Law features conversations with Maine lawyers who pursue unique interests or pastimes. Readers are invited to suggest candidates for Beyond The Law by contacting Dan Murphy at dmurphy@bernsteinshur.com



The humorist Dave Barry once quipped that the problem with winter sports activities is that they occur in winter. Don't tell that to Allan Lobozzo. The Lewiston attorney has clocked endless hours on the slopes, and shows no sign of letting up. While living with his family in Switzerland as a boy, Lobozzo developed a deep passion for skiing. Upon returning to Maine, he has been able to share his love of the sport by serving as a coach for young ski racers, including members of his own family. Lobozzo recently sat down with the Maine Bar Journal to discuss his interest.

How did you first become interested in skiing?

I grew up from the age of six in Geneva, Switzerland, where my father worked for Caterpillar Tractor Company. At six years old, he took me to the hills outside of Geneva, which are called the Jura Mountains. The mountain range overlooks Lake Geneva and is a distinct region that's separate from the Alps.

My father had grown up in Maine, and he had actually ski-jumped at Edward Little High School in Auburn. However, at that point, he probably had not skied in 25 years. In that little mountain village there was just one lift—a T-bar—and it stopped at lunchtime for an hour so the lift attendants could eat. That was my first day on snow, and I still remember it. I was hooked, and I wanted to ski just like him.

Was it exhilarating for you?

I think it was a little bit unsettling because I couldn't really do it at first, but I remember thinking that it was pretty cool to see my father do this "thing" that I had never seen him do before. I wanted to do it to and to be able to share it with him.

Did you spend a lot of time skiing together with your father while in Switzerland?

We spent countless hours on the slopes together. It was a formative experience because every winter in Geneva, the winter comes in cold and dark, and the city appears somewhat dismal. But on the weekends, if you drive into the mountains, the sun is shining and the snow is glistening. You actually ski above the clouds. It is a magnificent experience and I can remember doing it every single winter weekend with my father during my youth.

How many years were you in Switzerland?

I was there from first grade until I graduated from the International School of Geneva in 12th grade.



Where did you land after Switzerland?

I skied on the British national team for two years after high school, and we traveled all over Europe racing and training. Around 12 years old, I became interested in ski racing. I had a friend who was British, and he was involved in a British junior race club. Because my mother was British (she was from Scotland), I was eligible to race and train with them out of the ski resort called Wengen, Switzerland. Wengen is a well-known resort right at the foot of a 13,000-foot mountain called the Eiger.

There are various British ski clubs that have formed over the past 75 years all over Central Europe. They are there for young people to learn to ski, but then to learn how to race. Eventually, they become a feeder program for the British national ski team. So if you can afford to go to mainland Europe from Britain, that's where you go to race and train. If you can't, you stay in Scotland where it rains most of the time. Or you ski on the artificial slopes in England, which is like skiing on a massive toothbrush. Training in the Alps was more fun. After those two years, I returned to Maine and attended the University of Maine at Orono.

Did you continue skiing while in college?

At the time, the University of Maine at Orono had a Division I ski team, so I skied on their team for two years.

How did you do?

Well, I discovered that it was very difficult to live in Orono and train as much as I needed to train. I was probably more of a hard worker than a natural, so I needed to ski a lot to do well. All of a sudden, we were going to places like Eaton Mountain in Skowhegan at night. It was dark and cold, and it did not resemble the Alps whatsoever. After two years, I decided I would cash in my chips and focus on my studies. I had also met my wife-to-be, which was a major distraction, in a positive sense.

Tell us about your coaching activities related to skiing.

When I graduated from Orono, I got married and lived in Bangor with my wife. We started a family and I did not ski at all for about 8 years. I worked for the Bangor Daily News for 4 years. Then I went to law school. It was actually in law school in Portland that my daughter was turning 3. I would take a study break, drive with them to Shawnee Peak in Bridgton, and ski for a couple of hours. By the time they were about 7 or 8, around 1990, I had graduated from law school and I started coaching in the race program at Shawnee Peak. I coached at Shawnee Peak for 3 years, and then I went to Sunday River. I coached at Sunday River for 7 years in their race program. Then I took a 1-year sabbatical and took the entire family to Spain for a year. I did not ski at all that year. But when I came back, I took over the Shawnee Peak race program, leading that program for a decade until 2014. I then decided to retire from coaching, but that only lasted one year. This year, I took over the Lost Valley Race Club, just 5 miles from the doorstep of my office.

How is that going?

I liken it a little bit to picking up an abandoned puppy on the side of the road. It's been somewhat neglected over the years, but the good news is that there is a brand new owner at Lost Valley. He is very supportive, and the parents there are a great bunch of people. They are very enthusiastic. I think we can create a model of urban ski racing in Maine because the Lewiston-Auburn area has a population base of 100,000.

Through the years, there have been some great skiers that have come out of Auburn, and Lost Valley in particular.

Yes. The Parisian family is the most notable; four children, three of whom were Olympians. The area has a remarkable legacy.

And how old are the kids that you are coaching right now?

They range from 7 to 17 years old. I liken it to a blended family. It's such a small program at this point that there are only two of us coaching. We're trying to do it all.

What is it about coaching that gives you satisfaction?

Seeing the light in a young person's eyes when they get it right and they realize that they have mastered the slopes. They are creating a playground of this mountain, and they can jump, they can carve, and they can do almost anything they want on their skis. At an age where video, screens, and the Internet are so prevalent, it is so refreshing to see young people having fun on a mountain in the middle of the winter. That is just remarkable. I cannot guarantee that a participant will be on the U.S. Ski Team. But I always tell people that if you participate in my program as a young person for 3 years and pay attention, you will be an expert skier the rest of your life. That's pretty cool.

Do you get a chance to ski with family these days?

Yes. I have five children. Over the years, they have all at some point coached with me. None are coaching with me right now, but they have all maintained their interest in the sport and they all love to ski. We now have a 2 1/2-year-old grandson, and hopefully more in the future, so I always jokingly say that I am recreating the Lost Valley Race Club for my grandchildren.

Why is skiing such an attraction for you?

Well, there's a sense of speed and a sense of danger. There's also that sense of being good at something and being able to enjoy the outdoors. There can be a social aspect to it, but that's not necessary. You can ski all day with a group of friends and it's terrific, or you can ski by yourself, and that's terrific too. But I think it also connects me to my past, with my background as a child with my father. Now it connects me to raising my children on the slopes. And, I hope, it will be something that will connect me to my grandchildren. The more time that passes, the more connections there are.



DANIEL J. MURPHY is a shareholder in Bernstein Shur's Business Law and Litigation Practice Groups, where his practice concentrates on business and commercial litigation matters.



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