



Figure. Dr. Trattler raced for Dartmouth College's junior varsity ski team (left). Dr. Trattler won the unofficial Mid Mass ski race down the steps of his dormitory at Dartmouth College during his senior year (center). Drs. Loh and Trattler skiing during the off-hours of the AECOS Aspen meeting in 2017 (right).

HITTING THE SLOPES



A childhood passion for skiing lives on during ophthalmology meetings.

BY WILLIAM B. TRATTLER, MD

When you grow up in South Florida, just a 25-minute drive from the beach, an exciting option for a family vacation during winter break is to visit the mountains. My father, also an ophthalmologist, would take our family to ski each year. Since many of his colleagues also enjoyed skiing, he eventually began attending a medical conference in Aspen, Colorado. It was a trip I looked forward to every year from third grade to my senior year in high school. I believe that learning how to ski at a young age is what enabled me to achieve the level of skill I reached. By the time I was in high school, I was able to ski every slope on the mountain.

COLLEGE YEARS

I attended Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, which has one of the top ski programs in the country. Many Olympic skiers—both downhill and cross-country—have attended this school. Skiing can fulfill a student's physical education requirement because Dartmouth has its own ski mountain, which is about a 15-minute drive from campus.

I played baseball during my first 2 years of college but changed course and joined the junior varsity ski team in my junior year (Figure, left). It was an intense program, with many training sessions held in the fall to build up the incredible leg strength needed to be an effective ski racer.

Later, as part of ski practice, the team would ski small sections of the mountain

with racing gates and then hike back up with our skis instead of taking a lift to the top. We would do this over and over again to build our endurance and improve our turning ability. These practices helped me become a better racer because they built my strength and my racing skills. I was on the ski team for my junior and senior years of college. Two of my teammates went on to win NCAA National Championships my senior year, claiming the fastest time in both the men's and women's giant slalom race.

Apart from the Dartmouth ski team, I participated in the unofficial Mid Mass downhill race. Basically, we raced down the stairs of a dormitory. I am proud to say that I actually won that race during my senior year (Figure, center).

SKIING AT MEETINGS

After medical school, when I was just starting my ophthalmology training, I had a chance to go to the Wilmer Ophthalmology Current Concepts in Ophthalmology Winter Meeting in Vail, Colorado. I competed in and won the ski race that Walter J. Stark, MD, organized.

In subsequent years, I started attending the Aspen Invitational Refractive Symposium, which eventually became the AECOS Aspen meeting. This meeting hosts an annual ski race. I have won several of these races, but I am often neck and neck with Robert Maloney, MD; William F. Wiley, MD; and Roger Zaldivar, MD, MBA, who are all fantastic racers.

The AECOS Aspen race is a charity event. In order to compete, attendees donate money to Challenge Aspen, a

charity that supports blind skiers. The event occurs during the off-hours of the meeting and brings everybody together for friendly competition. I have also attended a conference called Aspen Cornea every year for the past 20 years, which takes place a week before AECOS Aspen. It is an excellent educational meeting, and it also provides the opportunity to spend time skiing.

IN THE FAMILY

Outside of traveling for ophthalmology meetings, I enjoy taking my children skiing and snowboarding during their spring break. My sons, Jeremy (age 16) and Josh (age 14), have become outstanding skiers because they have grown up skiing multiple times per year. My daughter, Ali (age 19), prefers snowboarding. They have been fortunate to get so much skiing experience growing up.

About 6 years ago, I met my wife, Jennifer Loh, MD, who was not a skier. That is no longer the case: She currently can even ski on some black runs (Figure, right). Even dedicated adults can become good skiers over time.

Skiing is an incredibly social activity and fits in very well as part of an educational meeting, as well as a great family bonding experience. ■

WILLIAM B. TRATTLER

- Director of Cornea, Center for Excellence in Eye Care, Miami
- Member, *CRST* Executive Advisory Board
- wtrattler@gmail.com
- Financial disclosure: None