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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Octogenarian Takes On STP for the Twelfth Time**

SEATTLE, JULY 14, 2004 – You can't stop this guy. This Saturday and Sunday, 81-year-old Karl Petterson will cycle his 12th Group Health Seattle to Portland Bicycle Classic (STP), and he's taking seven family members along with him.

In the early 1980s, Karl, a retired industrial engineer, bought a mountain bike and hit the ground pedaling. Today, he's still on it. In the 1990s, he got his toes into the cross-state cycling experience with RAGBRAI, the Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, a tour spanning from the Missouri to Mississippi border. He found the 471 miles, paced leisurely over a week, to be "lots of fun, like a carnival circus with something going on in each county."

After listening to his family talk about the two-day double century ride, Karl signed up for his first Seattle to Portland ride in 1990. Exempting a lapse between 2000 and 2002, he hasn't missed a stroke of the pedal.

“Whether it’s his Viking spirit or Swedish genes,” says Karl’s wife Mary, “he’s hard to keep up with.”

Before taking on the 200+ mile “rite of passage”, Karl was a competitive runner, mountain climber and sailor. Both he and Mary were also Snoqualmie Pass Ski Patrollers and Red Cross Disaster volunteers for decades. Some of his pursuits began to do a number on his knees, hence the segue into low-impact cycling.

“I’ve never thought of myself as an athlete,” he says. “I’m just lucky, and I’ve always been active.”

To train, he puts in about two to three days a week of cycling, including one of his favorite routes, the Green River Trail near his home in Normandy Park. Joining him on the Seattle to Portland ride this year are likely to be some of the youngest riders: his grandsons. John Henry, 12, will ride tandem with his father Jack Miller, and Jake, 14, who will be doing his second Seattle to Portland ride in a row.

Her father is a very strong rider, daughter Julie Miller said. Miller, who is also doing her 12<sup>th</sup> STP this Saturday, said that for a while, “we were all drafting behind him.”

Family members call Karl an “inspiration”. Niece Christine White, who will be flying from humid Illinois to a relatively cooler Seattle on Thursday, July 15, remembers watching as her Uncle Karl cycled his 11<sup>th</sup> Seattle to Portland ride last year. Soon after, White bought a bike and hit Illinois hills on two wheels. This March, her husband Tom surprised her with a Seattle to Portland ride ticket as a gift for her 54<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her sister, Carole Nordling, will also be taking on the Seattle to Portland ride for the first time.

“(Karl) would call and tell me about all the pavements (in Seattle), telling me not to worry about going too fast. He kept telling me, ‘You can do it!’”

In addition to daughter Julie, Karl’s two sons, John and Jim, will be riding, too. Jim has completed the Seattle to Portland as a one-day ride. Karl’s fourth child, Sue Graham, another avid cyclist, will be flying from Alberta, Canada to visit with the family post-ride.

The variety of bikes and paces means the tight-knit family may scatter well after they’ve left the start line at the University Washington on Saturday morning. Karl, who rides a hybrid, keeps a leisurely pace, unmoved by any desire to break a time goal or join the legions of 1-day riders. His favorite part of the ride each year?

“The finish line in Portland.”

**About Cascade Bicycle Club**

Cascade Bicycle Club is the nations largest bicycle club with over 5,200 members in Greater Seattle. Cascade produces eight annual events, including three marquee events: Group Health Seattle International Bicycle Expo; WRQ Bike to Work Month; and Group Health Seattle to Portland Bicycle Classic. CBC promotes bicycling for transportation, recreation and health – providing over 1,000 recreational rides annually. Cascade is a non-profit organization, directed by a board of nine elected volunteer directors and ten professional staff. The Cascade Bicycle Club Education Foundation, a 501 (c3) organization, promotes bicycling safety and skills throughout the Washington State.

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