

Cascade Courier, October 2015

Early Member Spotlight: Gordon Coale

By Cynthia Mullis, Cascade Member & Volunteer

As the late Sunday crowds thinned at the finish line of this year's STP, old-school bicyclist Gordon "Gordy" Coale, completed the ride on a customized, double fixed gear, Schwinn Typhoon Cruiser with BMX pedals.

Gordy, now age 70, also participated in the first STP in 1979. That year, he made it as far as Centralia before two flats and pouring rain got the best of him. Back then the event was a one-day, self-supported race, and his "crew" was his wife and five-month-old daughter, Jenny. After that year, kids and family interfered with another STP try.

Now thirty-six years later, Gordy had at last finished the STP on a fixed-gear bike with Jenny's husband Bill Valdez, who had just recently returned from deployment in Afghanistan.

Gordy was an original member of the Cascade Bicycle Club in the early '70s. He got involved with Cascade through his friendship with Jerry Baker and founders Mike and Rick Quam. In the early years of Cascade, Gordy worked on the *Freewheeler* newsletter and helped draft the club by-laws. Gordy says, "I first met Jerry in 1965 when I went to work at Boeing. Knowing somebody that raced bicycles was both pretty weird and pretty cool at the same time."

Gordy started bike racing and says that Baker "helped me buy my first bicycle. I paid \$75 for it and it was just about the most extravagant thing I'd ever purchased." He says "Riding a bicycle at that time was sort of a radical thing."

In 1975 Gordy stopped racing and focused on long distance riding. He says that using "bicycles as transportation was something that I always felt strongly about. I commuted on bikes for years," including 25 miles each way to his job in Everett. His last big event was the RAMROD in 1988. After he retired from Boeing in 1998, he continued riding until 2004 when he quit because of health and family issues.

That unfinished STP stayed on his mind however. In spring of 2014, overweight and suffering from asthma and COPD, he started biking again near his home on Whidbey Island. In November Gordy renewed his membership with Cascade and began logging the training miles needed to complete the STP he started in 1979. He says, "There's no reason why it can't be done. I'm a good example of that. It's just a matter of getting on the bike and riding. You start off slow and just keep going longer and longer."

Thanks to bicycling, Gordy says his health improved. "I just really enjoy riding. It's always been one of my passions, particularly long rides." His future goals now include tandem bike riding with his

wife, and exploring randonneuring. Gordy is planning to do the STP again in 2016 with his brother, 16-year-old grandson, and a bike that has a few more gears.

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In 1970 a small group of active cyclists gathered on Mercer Island. Little did these individuals know that they were going to change the future of bicycling in the Puget Sound region. 45 years later, the Cascade Bicycle Club is the largest bicycling organization of its kind in the U.S. with more than 15,000 members, 1,000 volunteers and 36 staff. Here we highlight a few of Cascade's earliest members, hear how their involvement changed the course of their lives and find out what they're up to today.

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