As you begin to read this, I’d like you to look over to the next page and read the reader letter titled “Ordway out.” Okay, you must be back. This letter appeared in my email inbox at the end of August and, unfortunately, the subject matter didn’t catch me off guard. A few weeks earlier, we heard from a church and another facility, both of which offer hospitality to cyclists on the TransAm, stating that they also would no longer be welcoming traveling cyclists on their premises. When the first one of these arrived, I figured a few bad apples out there had ruffled some feathers, nothing more.

Recently on Bikeportland.org, there had been an open discussion about an Australian bicycle traveler calling himself Ian who had been preying on the unsuspecting good people of Oregon by misrepresenting himself and his situation to relieve them of certain sums of money so he could continue his journey to who knows where. If the pictures of Ian posted on the site were accurate, it should have been obvious that he probably wasn’t cycling more than a few miles a day, but the cash flowed anyway. Come on, Ian. This is the best scam you can come up with, posing as a down-on-his luck traveling cyclist? This is America. If you’re going to scam people, you’ve got to think bigger, you know, too big to fail and all that.

So what do we have here? Are the highways on which cyclists travel being invaded by ne’er-do-wells who through their less-than-admirable behavior are splattering road grime all over the good reputation of the the vast majority of traveling cyclists and the community as a whole? Is this new Golden Era of bicycle travel being threatened to any significant degree? As many may already know, June Curry, the Cookie Lady of the TransAm recently passed away. June is a legend of the TransAm and we named our Trail Angel Award after her (read more about June in Dan D’Ambrosio’s profile on pages 24-29) and Gillian Hoggard received the Trail Angel Award in 2006. And a church is closing their doors to cyclists? This is not good.

I’m hoping this cluster of news about bad behavior is an anomaly and that good people who offer assistance and hospitality along the roadways of America won’t have to think twice before doing so. It’s these encounters that often are what traveling cyclists most fondly remember when their journey is over, as Willy Weir so often reminds us in the pages of Adventure Cyclist and as Tim Cigelske reveals in his essay, “The Kindness of Strangers” on pages 36-37.

When you’re out there on your bicycles, remember that you represent a community of people who have built a fine reputation that needs to be fiercely protected. Don’t be like Ian. Be more like Ghandi.

Michael Deme
Editor, Adventure Cyclist
ditor@adventurecycling.org