

Solution for the Cowboy

Growing up, among my favorite movies were those about the Wild West. These productions became the American morality play. Of all the cowboy stars, Roy Rogers was my favorite.

After the leading role in *Under Western Stars*, his first movie, Rogers began receiving overwhelming stacks of fan mail. He faithfully began the task of answering the letters. Making \$150 a week, however, he couldn't even pay for the postage.

Finally, he went to Herb Yates, head of Republic Pictures, and told him about the problem, hoping that the studio would handle some of the fan mail. Yates wasted little time telling Rogers that he was foolish to worry about answering fan mail; nobody else in the business did, because it took too much time and money.

Rogers could not accept that. He felt that if someone was thoughtful enough to sit down and write him a letter, he had an obligation to answer it.

Much in demand, Rogers used his popularity to help solve the problem. He arranged a series of personal appearances and used the money he earned, often more than his weekly salary at Republic Pictures, to help defray his mailing expenses. For the first two years at Republic, the cost of handling his fan mail exceeded the salary the studio was paying him.

Rogers traveled thousands of miles and performed countless one-night stands to buy stamps, purchase pictures, and pay the salaries of four people he hired to help answer his fan mail.

And he became one of Hollywood's most popular and longest-lived stars.

If there is a problem, look for the solution. In Rogers' case, it addressed his personal desire and accelerated his rising stardom.



– Beecher Hunter