Sunday

Dear Mrs. + Mrs. Hammerstein,

I know Emily Post would be simply shattered at the thought of sending a personal message to a business address. However, on occasion, I rather enjoy sending poor Emily into orbit and, if my antenna was not completely out of order on Thursday, it would seem that neither of you would be seriously disturbed by such a faux pas!

My parents always impressed on me the fact that life is the most beautiful + exciting gift one can have + that love is the force that gives life meaning. They taught me that each one of us is given life for a special reason, each is unique + adds particular beauty to the universe. Some are meant to reflect them. Their lives gentlemen, warmth or laughter, others reflect the glory + beauty that can come from suffering. There are wonderful people, like my mother, who simply pour out love, + find their purpose + fulfillment in the success + happiness of those they love. I have a feeling, Mrs. Hammerstein, that you belong to that select group. There there are those who have been given a great talent, who reach out + tangibly influence the lives of thousands. Who can say which is the greater or more important gift!

But this I do know, if anyone of us fails to fulfill the purpose for which he was born, some beauty, some integrity will be forever missing in the world.

It always thrills me to watch the patterns of life form, move, and change. We are so unaware of how we influence + are influenced + by whom. For example: you two have had a tremendous influence on one another, have in a way "informed" the other, (your closeness is quite evident even to a stranger). As a result the Hammerstein books + lyrics are completely different than they otherwise might have been. Ever since Oklahoma burst across the theatrical horizons, like thousands of others, I've absorbed + responded to your art. I am a very different person than I would have been if you two had never lived. Incredible, isn't it?

And now, because Richard + Mary Halliday have such devotion to their friends, I have had the privilege of actually meeting you — and it was truly a moving experience, not because your names would peal like thunder if subtly "dropped" but because I found your stimulating people it would be a joy to know. Saint Thomas Aquinas once wrote that friends are our "alter ego" + that our love for + pride in

the success + happiness of our films will add a delightfully human touch to the courts of heaven. For my part, much of my heaven will consist in talking with people I enjoy. Since we probably will not meet again, "getting to know" the Hammersteins will be a happy day for me in paradise.

Although I was embarrassed at the thought of taking any of your time, Dick very happily Richard insisted. There is no way to express the joy you gave me. Anyone who could write "How do you catch a cloud + pin it down" will, I hope understand! God bless + keep you both!

Sincerely,

Dick Rodgers