November 11, 1934

I greet you all, noble countrymen and countrywomen, with the words: Let Jesus Christ be praised.

From time to time, I receive letters which, upon reading, create in me such doubt about the nobility of human nature; sadness grips the heart. Certain people are so inhuman that discouragement floods the mind like an ocean wave and I ask myself if it's worth the effort to lift up the souls of my country men and women and throw up my hands and say: stop because all my efforts are useless. Fruitless is your work. It is at those times that I go to the chapel, kneel before the altar, and tell my sorrow to the concealed Lord. Time passes, my discouragement disappears, doubts go away, and the reticence to work also goes away. Again I put my hand to the plow in order to till the soil of the hearts and minds of the listeners, and sow the seed of God’s love and love of neighbor, and graft the principles of truth and justice of God. It is a formidable task. The enemy does not sleep but fights fiercely. They don’t beat around the bush. Slander and hatred is their favorite defense. They throw the venom of malice and suspicion, at the good and honorable name hoping that some ugly thing link itself to the person which will dissuade them from doing good by discouraging them. And so it is if the person relies solely on his own abilities and strength and believed in his own capability; that is not however, the way it is. Hope in God and relying on his help, understanding that the cause is noble, and the means to attain it are honorable and just – supports the soul and gives strength to further endeavors. Reluctantly, I read a letter dated July first and initialed B B. Here it is: “***Father you ought to be ashamed to be so enamored with the Polish people. Despite the fact that I am Polish, I am ashamed of it. The type of Poles coming to America is the worst in the world. They are without refinement and without culture. They neither know how to read or to write. However, they knew how to drink and argue among themselves. Father, why don’t you talk about these things, about what these people are all about? You deserve to treat them as the Africans and Chinese, because they are groups who are ignorant and who do not deserve better treatment. But you do not tell the truth because you do not know it and so you do not talk about it. The Poles in America are like a bunch of cattle; they will soon disappear and it will be better for their progeny.*” *With no respect, B. B. from Chicago.***

I had the intention to keep this letter to myself. I cannot do this. Whoever it is who hides behind the initials, B. B., unconsciously signs himself with the phrase, “Without respect”, reveals his identity as a person who really has no respect because he spits with the disgusting saliva and stench in the face of our fathers and forefathers. And so the title of our talk today is:

 **WANDERERS AND HEROES**

I do not reach for any kind of book. It will neither help me nor is it of use to me. Life is the best teacher and advisor. The more difficult life’s problems are, the better and more perfect the teacher of life’s truths. As an example of our fathers, wanderers and heroes, I put before your eyes, my dear listeners, two figures. The first is my own noble father. Although I am today almost fifty years old – although I have sat at many tables, although I have had my crosses and perhaps have fallen under the weight, I can’t even come close to what my father went through and what he suffered. A half century ago he came to America. Hard times, persecution and the lack of bread, forced him to leave his foregathers country. He came by himself, poor and naked. He brought with himself his entire possessions: what he carried and what he wore. And believe me that was very little. However he brought with himself real treasures: a healthy soul and a healthy body; a deep faith, honesty, nobility, hard-working disposition, dedication, thrift and perseverance. He arrived near Pittsburgh, to the soft coal mines in the region. Times were different than they are today. Affairs then were quite different from those we encounter now. Miners were looked upon as prisoners and treated as such. For our people there wasn’t a good word or civil acceptance. Long hours, hard work and little pay was the miner’s plight. But that didn’t discourage him. Lacking the knowledge of English he survived on jestures. He worked until midnight to four or five in the afternoon for $1.15 an hour. Worn out and rushed to work like a beast of burden, he sometimes weakened in strength but never in spirit – never. He was cursed, made fun of, and nicknamed when he took a piece of black bread with lard, and bit it with tears and swallowed. I remember when I was a boy, the hardships of life; they forced me as the eldest child to go to work in the coke plants. We lived in Everson and worked in McClure, Pa. When we went to work dad took off his hat and recited, loudly and piously his morning prayers. At the end he would say a Hail Mary for the care of his children to the Heavenly Mother. Many were the times when, instead of taking the trolley, he would walk home, sitting at times by the wayside in order to save a “nickel” for treating his children to some candy. True, he was demanding and justly rigorous; but at the same time, a caring and sensitive father. He was demanding of himself, and understanding of others and loving in his relationship with his family. He didn’t spare himself and dedicated himself to us. He looked out for us, reprimanded us. With the help of God, he managed to rear a large group of children, and each had the opportunity to better his status and do well. Today my Dad is 84 years old. Exhausted from his hard work and suffering and denying himself well deserved entertainment, he stands as a living testament to a real hero, as were all of our pioneer fathers. True, they had their insufficiencies and vices just as any mortal being would have, on the other had they weren’t deficient in their virtues which outnumbered their debits. Who built the numbers churches and schools, formed organizations? Who managed to pay off their mortgages, and provide numerous families, all well-educated and all done with dedication and love. In addition they sent money to relatives in Poland in the millions annually. Adding together all their deeds, love, striving, patience, hard work, they are incomparable and are thousands of times more worthy of praise and honor; perhaps we need to be ashamed of ourselves in any comparison.

There is still another type of our heroic pioneers. Buffalo has an example. His name is Anthony Schreiber, a former censor for the Polish National Association and owner of the largest brewery in the United States. Not long ago he told me about his acquisitions and difficulties, concealing nothing. One could tell by his words that there was a certain pride, dressed in sorrow and pain, because after so many years of work and procedures, they separate him from the faith and nationality. Anthony Schreiber was born in Raciąż in 1864. He was baptized and was an altar boy through eleven years. His parents sent him away to school for higher studies. His learning skills were good, but the German nationalists kept an eye on him because his family was involved in the uprising of 1863. The young Schreiber, feeling his Polish blood in his veins, and contempt for his persecutors, made up his mind to go to America. Despite the families pleas for him to stay, he set out for Hamburg. Here he met an English officer with whose help he came to New York, on November 4th, 1881. He did not speak English and had no relatives in America. However he felt that God would help him if he helped himself through his difficulties. He began to learn English. He would get up at four or five in the morning and go to factory after factory seeking jobs. In the evening he held music classes for children leaning the violin, taught them to sing Polish songs, in addition to “The Star Spangled Banner.” He now worked as a plain laborer in melting wax. After three months he was declared unable to do heavy work so he got a desk job. After six months he got a job as a beaurocrat. In three years, because he had learned English, was industrious and honest he became a representative for the Mary Rawolle Company for the United States, Mexico and Canada. In 1888, Schreiber married Teodora Roszykiewicz. He parted company with his previous representative job. He was at no loss for a job for English and Canadian capitalists. Among the offers was on by Millionaire Rockefeller, to join the firm “American Corn Products Refining Co.”, which corporation has factories in North America, Central America, South America, in France, Sweden, Germany, Holland, England, China and Japan. Schreiber however refused the offers, settling in Buffalo, and established a brewery. He had a tough time here with internationals, who wished in all kinds of ways to outwit him at his control on the polish population in Buffalo. The spread rumors that Shreiber was neither a Pole nor a Catholic; that he made it difficult for his workers. In these attacks were hidden jealousies and anger. The Polish National Union, from 1905 to 1913 gave him the position of censor. On a meeting in Detroit, Mich., 1913 he refused a further offer. At the time of his establishment a new spirit inhabited the Union, the founders and workers got to work; and other organizations such as the unions changed their ideas about the understanding of cooperation. The censor called a meeting of the Polish Congress to Washington. There were three Embassies, the German, Russian and Austrian, who energetically protested against the Polish Congress. The Congress took place. Members and guests attended, from all three embassies. During Anthony Schreiber’s tenure, an emigration house was established and a school in Cambridge Springs, Pa. Added to that he had three daughters and one son, having only one daughter still living. I think it is safe to say that this man has done more than any other Pole in America. Honest, hospitable, merciful, ready for service, and respected by all. Just as he worked and suffered, did good, persevered as did other Poles of our persuasion.

I have demonstrated to you, my dear listeners, two Polish types. Let me put in a few words in recognition and gratitude to our mothers who stood prominently and constantly on the side of our fathers. There are no better mothers in this world than our mothers. In the midst of their needs, and crosses they never lose heart. Whatever we have and are is due to their care.

Now I ask you, should I be ashamed of our kindly and hard-working people, that I praise them and honor their virtues. True, one or the other of our fathers had no polish or cultural outlooks. But that was all external. Under all that exterior there existed a nobility of intellect, character, a gold heart with love and full of mercy. There was no room for duplicity or pharisaical bent. And if the current generation improved their polish and culture; what is the reason for that. Isn’t it those who sweated and toiled so that their children could have something better than they had. True some of our parents could not read and write. It was not their fault. Invading governments, with their influence were to blame: the Russians, Prussians, Austrians. Their pen, plow, hammer and pick and shovel; their books, mines and factories prevented development. Despite the fact that they did not read and write, they knew, by heart, the commandments of God and their civic responsibilities. Today's generation, steeped with knowlege and behavior, does not know God, breaks the law, at every occasion and at every step. Those who do not believe it should read the Police blotters in our newspapers. Better still visit our prisons and correctional facilities. True, our fathers engaged in quarrels and strife among themselves. But we should forgive them for that. They brought that with them to this country because of the annexations of foreign governments. Despite that, when it came to work for the common good, they were arm in arm building parishes, schools, and organizations. Is there more agreement and understanding among us in current times? Take Buffalo for example. The parishioners of Corpus Christi look askance at those of St. Stan's; these again criticize the parishioners of Transfiguration; these criticize parishioners of St. Adalbert's, who in turn look askance at those of St. John Kanty. Is it any better in the professional fields? In being compare with our forefathers we are donkeys. We know not and will not understand that in unity and cooperative ventures and only then, we come across favorably. A good example of that cooperation occurred in the last pre-invasion times. Many different politicians stood before the microphone and denounced their fellow Poles. Such cooperation! We ought to be ashamed.

Comparing us, B. B. with the Blacks and the Chinese, you demonstrate that you have no ideas about us Poles and our status. First of all, you unjustly throw dirt at our fathers and now you spit in their faces. Read the history of the United States, and if you have in your heart the least bit of spark of fairness, you will recognize the merits of our countrymen which they have in respect to our newly chosen America. After reading that history, fall on your knees, beat your breast and say: "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." Let us, my dear listeners, get rid of some of the shortcomings of our fathers and forefathers, imitate their virtues; let us follow the route of our pioneer-heroes, in order that the world will be compelled to wonder and say: American Poles are great sons, great fathers.