

# Władysław Sielski

~ A Pole in the Philippine Islands ~

Jarosław Szczepankiewicz



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Embassy  
of the Republic of Poland  
in Manila

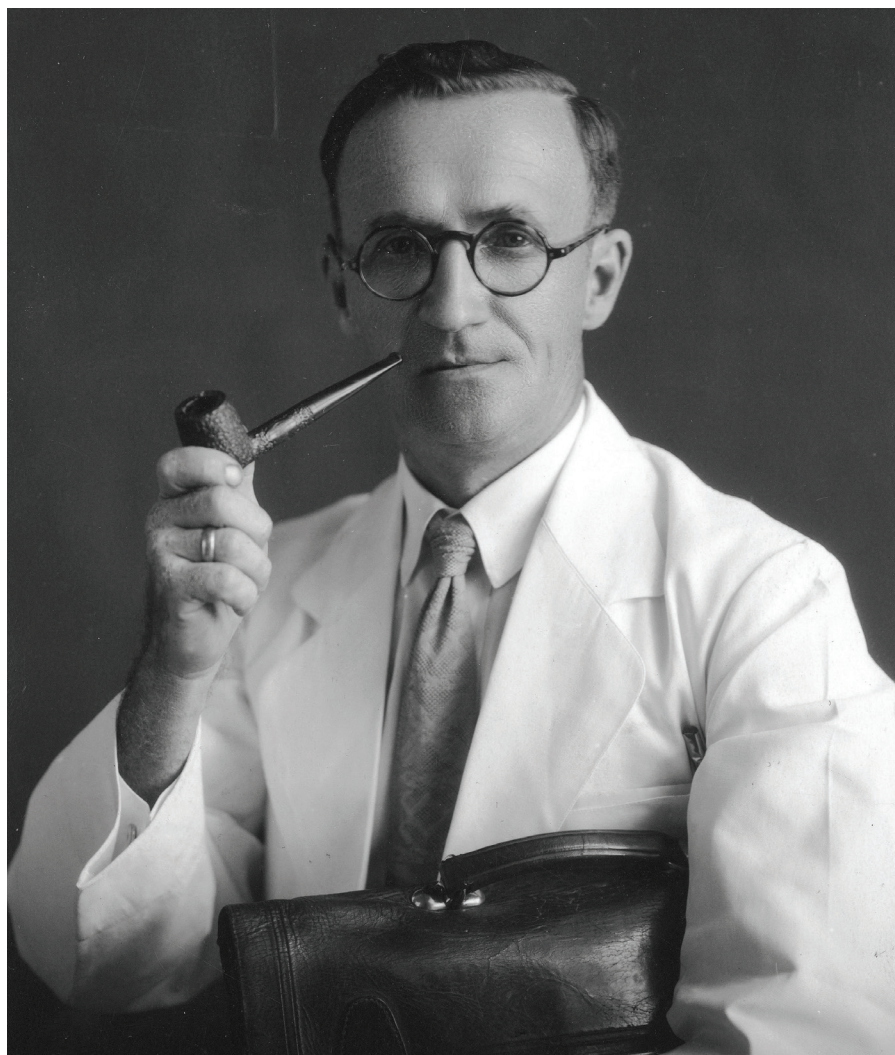
# **Władysław Sielski**

**~ A Pole in the Philippine Islands ~**

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**N**early 100 years have passed, since Polish patriot and businessman Władysław Sielski (13.05.1890-04.1970) opened "Sielski Sweet Shop Co." on 123 M.H. del Pilar Street, on Ermita, in Manila, in the Philippines. In Sielski's time, few Poles visited the Philippines. They came from both Europe and the USA. Among them were missionaries, travelers, researchers, adventurers, musicians and soldiers. The most famous, though few people in Poland or the Philippines remember today, were: Father Wojciech Męciniński (1598-1643), Jesuit priest and martyr of Japan; Father Jan Chryzostom Bąkowski (1672-1732), Jesuit priest from China; Paweł Strzelecki (1797-1873), explorer of Australia; Jan Kubary (1846-1896), explorer of Oceania; Aleksander Tansman (1897-1986), composer, author of "Les Iles Philippines"; Artur Rubinstein (1887-1982), pianist-virtuoso; Zygmunt Dunikowski (1889-1964), called "the last alchemist of the XX century"; Sergeant Walter Kwieciński (1914-1988), commander of the last operational mortar on Corregidor, the last American bastion in the Philippines in 1942. The motives for coming to the Philippines were different: Christianity, the desire to know the world, the search for wealth, and war.

Władysław Sielski arrived in the Philippines in 1925 in search of a new home and wealth with his wife Olga and daughter Jadwiga Teresa from Japan.



W. Sielski with a pipe, Manila, 1933, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives



W. Sielski with his wife Olga and daughter Jadwiga, Manila, 1933, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives



W. Sielski, first on the right with a pipe, in front of his shop next to a delivery van with a daughter and employees: Januszkiewicz, Antoniewicz and Filipino agent, Manila, 1933, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives



**M**anila, called at that time the “Pearl of the Orient”, was for the ambitious Pole a city of unlimited possibilities. The South-Asian metropolis was a visible evidence of American architectural impetus: iron-concrete skyscrapers shot into the sky, asphalt streets were surrounded by green palms and colorful flowers. The adjoining narrow Spanish Baroque streets shimmered with a colorful multi-ethnic crowd. Sielski took a risk. He was the only Polish entrepreneur in the Philippines. He opened the confectionery “Sielski Sweet Shop Co.” at 123 M.H. del Pilar Street in the Ermita district of Manila.

He went to work with vigor to open a candy and chocolate factory establishing business contacts with the big and well-known Polish confectionery producer “Fruziński J. Chocolate Factory”. He dreamed of bringing Polish workers from Harbin in Manchuria to his factory, but the Poles from Harbin made too high wage demands.

PHOTO By BAYOT  
MANILA P. I.



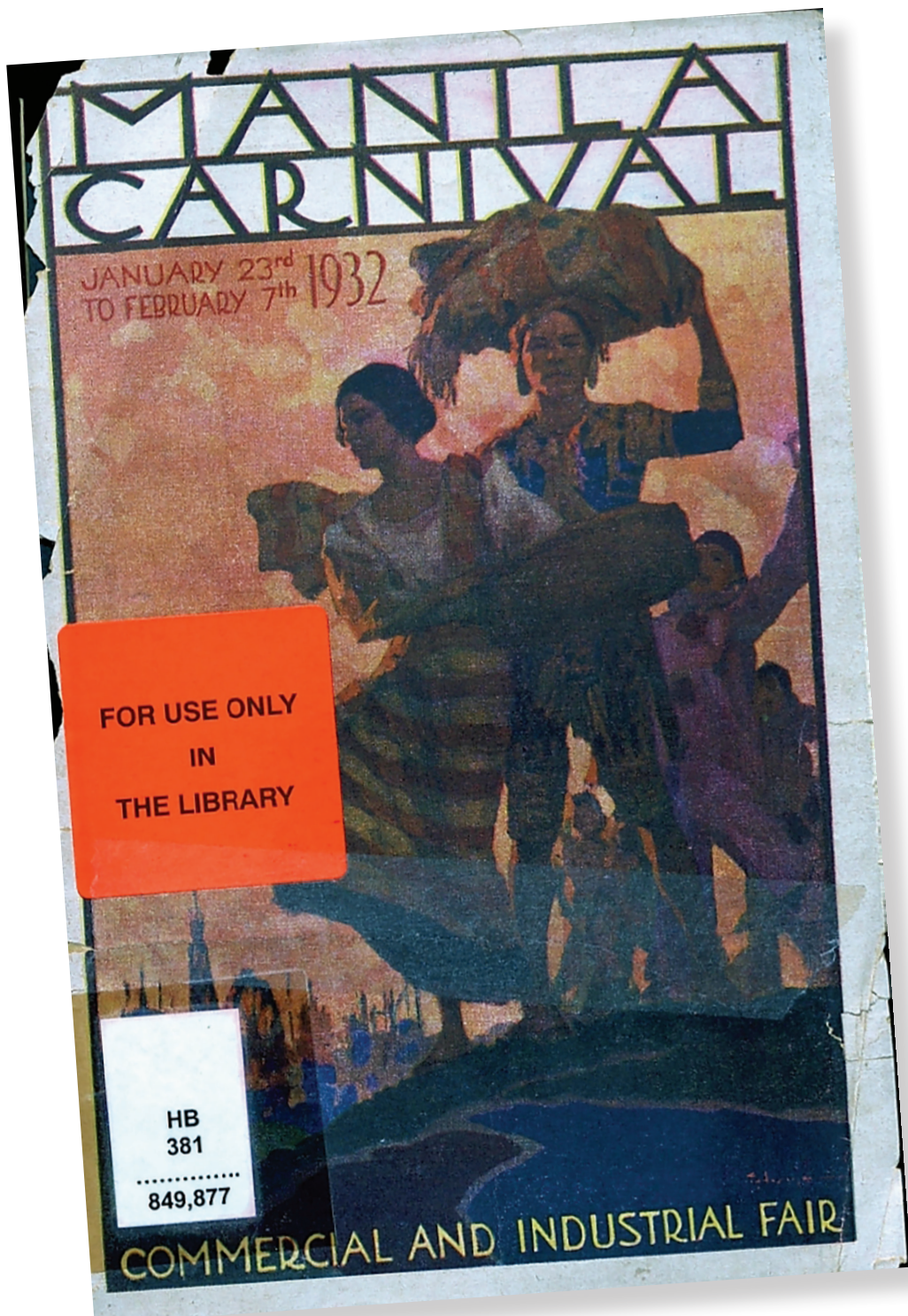
PHOTO BY BRYDT  
MANILA P.I.

W. Sielski in front of the shop on the bumper of a delivery van and daughter Jadwiga, Manila, 1933, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives



**S**ielski was dynamically involved in the economic life of the Philippines. He participated in the Trade and Industrial Fair organized in Manila (Manila Carnival. Commercial and Industrial Fair) in 1931-1933





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**Paper Boxes**

Legaspi Press, 1673 Gral. Luna Santos, Apolonio, 739 G. Tuason  
 Manila Paper Bag Mfg. Co., 106 Eli- Velasco Press, 139 Manrique  
 zondo

**Packing Cases**

Chen Tieng, 534 Gandara Lim, Kui, 545 Eleano  
 Chua Chaco, 547 Nueva Lim No, 697 Ylaya  
 Chua Kiang, 224 Chica San Sing, 482 Dasmariñas  
 Chua Li, 831 Lavezares Tam Lim, 124 Hormiga  
 Hi Tieng, 132 Hormiga Tan Lim, 421 Poblete  
 Ho Kun, 306 Claveria Tan Sioc Wan, 340 San Vicente  
 Lee Yeng, 517 Nueva Wing Hing, 419 Poblete

**BREWERIES**

San Miguel Brewery, 132 Aviles

**BRICK AND TILE FACTORIES**

Machuca & Co., 21 Balmes Bacod Street  
 Manila Hume Pipe and Tile Works, Tuason & Hijos, 1174 Agno

**BUTTON FACTORIES**

Manila Button Factory, Beata Street Phil. Button Corp., 828 Misericordia

**CANDLE MANUFACTURERS**

Bon Seng, 365 Sto. Cristo Pe Bun Kun, 433 Salazar  
 Co Chia, 423 Caballerces Philippine Manufacturing Co., 1120 Ve-  
 La Estrella de Oro, 433 Salazar quez  
 La Luna Clara (Lim King Chin), 538 T. Sam Kong, 817 Jaboneros  
 Pinpin Sy Yinco Sy Kee, 130 Villalobos  
 La Milagrosa, 520 Clavel Uy Bunjo, 122 Espeleta  
 Ong Yam Siong, 213 Sto. Cristo Wolff & Co., Inc., T. J., 20 Plaza Mor

**CANDY MANUFACTURERS**

Asia Candy Factory, 479 M. de Binondo, Co, 502 Estero Cegado, Sta. Cruz  
 San Nicolas O'Racca Confectionery, 830-838 Teod-  
 Cocolait, Pureza, Sampaloc Alonzo, Sta. Cruz  
 El Tesoro, 755-757 Ave. Rizal, Sta. Cruz Oriental Candy Factory, 290 Libert  
 Hoc Chuan Liong, 1222 Sta. Elena, Pasay, Rizal  
 Binondo Purity Candy Kitchen, 527 Peñarrut  
 "Kasikatan", J. Rizal, Mandaluyon, San Nicolas  
 Rizal See So Candy Factory, 256 Tetuan, S  
 Cruz  
 Kim Cheng Ten, 352 Echague, Sta. Cruz Shimada & Co. B., 753 Folgueras, S  
 Kubo, K., 152 Gardenia, Sampaloc Niclas  
 La Familia, 746-748 Ongpin, Sta. Cruz Sielski Sweet Shop Co., 123 M. H.  
 La Patria, 631-633 Legarda, Sampaloc Pilar, Ermita  
 La Perla, Inc., 228-234 Plaza Sta. Cruz Tan Kah Kee & Co., 118-122 Rosario a  
 M. Y. San & Co., 69 Escolta, Binondo 200-204 Gandara  
 Malabon Sugar Co., Smith, Bell & Co., Tropic Products Company, Pureza, Sa  
 Ltd., Agents, Hongkong & Shanghai paloc  
 Bank Bldg., Bdo. Walker, Herbert, Pureza, Sampaloc  
 Malayan Candy Factory, 752 Folgueras, Tendo Washington Candy Factory, 721 Ju  
 Manila Candy Factory, 152 Gral. G. Gerc- Luna, Tondo  
 nimo, Sampaloc, Yek Yu, 211 Ongpin, Binondo  
 Nestle and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk

**CANNERIES**

Banahaw (Jose Sison & Co.,) 330 Philippine Fruit & Pkg. Co., 34 Esco  
 Carriedo Philippine Packing Corporation, 310 N  
 El Mundo, 211 Espeleta tional City Bank Bldg.  
 Gopoco Grocery, 410 Echague Rizal Park Confectionery, 207 Karapat  
 Philippine Cannery, 175 Lipa, Sampaloc Tan Kah Kee & Co., 122 Rosario

**CAP FACTORIES**

Aquino, Carlos, 529 Magdalena Tong Keh, 533 Ongpin

In Manila, Sielski developed the passion of a documentary photographer. In the lens he tried to capture the process of awakening the national and political identity of Filipinos. As a Pole, he watched with sympathy with these aspirations.



Demonstrators from "Partido Nacionalista" from Zamboanga with the banner "Must the Heart of America beat only for the freedom of Ireland, of Poland, and of the Tchechoslovaks and not for the independence of the Philippines Islands?". Manila, 1924, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives



Demonstrators with banners demanding independence from the Philippines, Manila, July 12, 1931, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archive



Sergio Osmeña, later President of the Philippines (second from the right) with his wife Esperanza Limjap-Osmeña and Manuel Roxas, later President of the Philippines (right), Manila, 1/03/1928, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives.



Senate President Sergio Osmeña addresses the audience, 12/07/1931, Manila, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives.



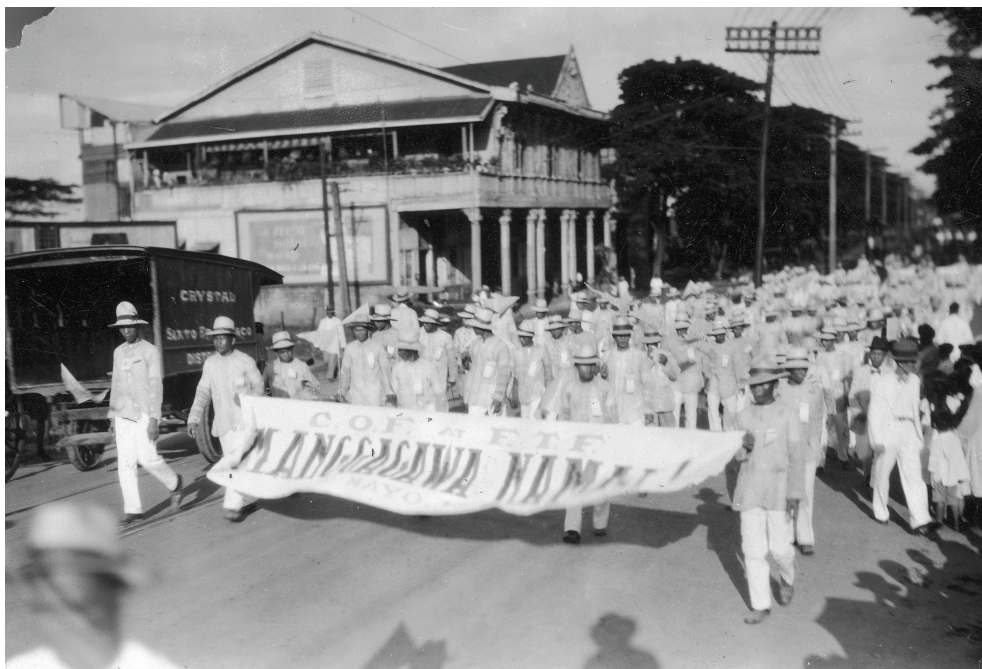
"Rizal Day", a platform prepared by the University of Manila depicting the rising dawn of freedom of the Philippines against the backdrop of the Parliament building, Manila, 30/12/1929, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives.



"Rizal Day", a platform depicting the rising dawn of freedom of the Philippines. Manila, 30/12/1929, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives.



"Rizal's Day", Platform from Pangasinan Province, Manila, 30/12/1930, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives.



Celebrations of 'May 1'. Procession of employees of a cigar factory, Manila, 1 May 1930, author: W. Sielski, National Digital Archives.



In 1932 The Great Depression begins, which severely affected the Philippines. W. Sielski writes:

“

gold has disappeared somewhere and vanished, like camphor. Maybe it is in lockers, maybe is immigrated abroad, sure that is gone. From our slim colony, many having lost all their wealth, went to the United States, I'm still there, but what will I do tomorrow? ”

– W. Sielski, “The Philippines in ruins” in: “Światowid”, 1932



In these hard times the wheel of fortune, however, again smiled at Sielski. The Philippines in 1934 embraced a gold rush that reached its peak in 1937. The country was bursting with gold mines. From 1934 to 1941 extraction of gold increased by 400%! Sielski became a sales representative of several of twenty-three operating gold mines on the Islands.

In 1937, as a wealthy man in Manila he took care of Father Ignacy Posadzy, a Jesuit provincial and a Polish delegate to the International Eucharistic Congress in Manila. Well-known Polish hierarchs took part in the Congress: Adam Sapieha - Archbishop of Cracow, Henryk Przeździecki - Bishop of Siedlce, Teodor Kubina - Bishop of Częstochowa. Bishop H. Przeździecki celebrated mass for the Polish diaspora in the Philippines.

**S**ielski suspected that the Philippines's independence or Japanese occupation would end the existence of a tiny Polish colony in the Philippines. During the Second World War, Władysław Sielski and his daughter Jadwiga, along with 22 Poles, were interned. He spent more than three years in the Japanese concentration camps of St. Thomas and Los Baños. The freedom for imprisoned Poles was brought by 300 American commandos and Filipino guerrillas, who liberated the Los Baños camp in a daring attack on February 23, 1945.

Los Baños Internment Camp final roster of interned Poles typed by internee Carol Terry in February 1945, Filipinas Heritage Library



Guard tower of the Los Baños camp.



Manila Nostalgia  
© J. Sams

Los Baños camp.

Los Baños Internment Camp final roster of interned  
Poles typed by internee Carol Terry in February  
1945, Filipinas Heritage Library

Polish

Adelski, Borys

Bieniarz, Edward

Gang, Samuel Sam

Hirschorn, Marcus

Keller, Harry

Krzewinski, Ludwig

Lerner, Helen

Lounsbury, Irene Olshenke

Mingelgruen, Wilhelm

Neuman, Rudolph Ham

Propper, Norbert

Rabinowicz, Icko

Rabinowicz, Mordchal

Sackiewicz, Alexander

Sackiewicz, Wladyslaw

Sielski, Wladyslaw

Sielski-Jones, Yawwiga Teresa

Soroka, Samuel Chaim

|    |   |                        |                        |
|----|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| 9  | ✓ | SHAW, ALICE            | PP 771                 |
| 10 | ✓ | SHAY, FAY              | 1/20/43                |
| 11 | ✓ | SHERRY, Elizabeth      |                        |
| 12 | ✓ | SHERRY, John           | SS                     |
| 13 | ✓ | SUTTON, KATIE          | Dept. Halifax 5-10-43  |
| 14 | ✓ | SIELSKI, MR. WLADYSLAW | Phil PP 728640-51-1937 |
| 15 | ✓ | SILVA, MARIA           | Rosalie                |
| 16 | ✓ | SILVA, NOEL            | Alexander              |
| 17 | ✓ | SILVA, OFELIA          | BARRETTO               |
| 18 | ✓ | SILVA, PEDRO           | NOLASCO                |
| 19 | ✓ | SILVA, PEDRO JR.       |                        |
| 20 | ✓ | SINCLAIR, GEOFFREY     | Dept. Halifax 5-10-43  |

Passenger list of the USS Admirat E. W. Eberle. W. Sielski item No. 14

In 1952, Władysław Sielski obtained American citizenship. He died in Chicago in 1970. He never saw his beloved Reborn Poland.

No. 6627965

Name SIELSKI, Władysław

residing at 1136 Milwaukee Ave., Chicago 22, Ill.

Age 61 years. Date of order of admission \_\_\_\_\_

Date certificate issued \_\_\_\_\_ by the \_\_\_\_\_

U. S. District Court at Chicago, Illinois

Petition No. 338712

Alien Registration No. 6078131

Władysław Sielski  
(Complete and true signature of holder)

Documentation on naturalization of W. Sielski

**S**ielski arrived in the United States in 1945 at the age of 55. He settled in Chicago. In one of the letters W. Sielski described the inhuman conditions in Japanese camps.

May 13, 1945, p. 14

**God Bless United States of America**

Below we present an interesting letter sent to the Editors by the well-known Polish citizen in the Philippines, Wladyslaw Sielski, who not long ago was freed from Japanese captivity.

My dear and beloved—Miraculously rescued from imprisonment after 3 years and 1 month: 2 years in *Concentration Camp* Los Banos, 1 year 1 month in St. Tomas, and on February 23, an hour before being shot—we were rescued by Parachute Forces and “Gorillas”—*God Bless U.S. of America*.

They tortured us with terrible hunger—once a day 2 spoons of rice soup. We ate all the grass *w kampie* [in the camp], all the banana and papaya trees. The whole *Camp* was sick from Beri-Beri. I am completely swollen and my legs are full of wounds. They were shooting us. They hit us in the face. They forced us to work hard. Daily 4 to 6 died. For a year already I awaited death and I looked into its eyes patiently. It is a year that I am walking in *Camp* without shoes. They confiscated everything of mine and burned it—about \$150,000. So the Japanese-Asians tortured us. They tormented the white race. About 100 Poles were in the two *Camps* of St. Tomas and Los Banos. I, a *gold mine stock broker*-director of a few *gold mines*, today am a beggar, a pauper, without shoes and a shirt—sick and broken.

Gradually I am coming to myself. I am seeing white bread after three years, coffee and sugar. American doctors are treating us and the American Army is feeding us. Praise be to America. *America, we internees from Los Banos Concentration Camp—Love You and Bless You, and pray for U. S. Army. God Bless You Dear America and the U. S. Army.*

[15 lines omitted]

Most likely, they will transport us to America. I am getting better steadily. I do not know what will be further. For the time being, I am healing, I am coming back to life and slowly recovering my strength—thanks to America. Here among us, upon meeting each of us greets the other with the words—*God Bless America*.

I do not know what has happened in the world and how the world looks after 3 years of being locked in a hard prison. I include to You, Countrymen, greetings from paupers and *lazarzy*,<sup>40</sup> Your devoted

Wladyslaw Sielski  
c-o Civilian War Aid  
American Red Cross  
Hqs 6th Army Civil Affairs, No. 2  
APO 442—San Francisco, California

**W**ładysław Sielski left the Philippines for the U.S.A in September 1945 aboard of the ship USS Admiral E. W. Eberle. He came to the USA in 1945 at the age of 55. He settled in Chicago. In one of the letters to the editorial office, he described the inhumane conditions prevailing in the Japanese camps. In 1952, Władysław Sielski obtained American citizenship. He died in Chicago in 1970. He never saw his beloved Poland.

USS Admiral E. W. Eberle







*Manila Carnival: Trade and Industrial Fair, 1930, author: W. Steski, National Digital Archives*