



Photos courtesy of Travis Kraft

# TRAVIS KRAFT

## The White Dude Who Loves Pinoy Culture

By **JOSEPH L. PERALTA**  
AJPress

The first time I heard about Travis Kraft, it was through a friend who had sent me a link of his video in YouTube. Busy as I was, I did not have the time to view the video although the e-mail said something like "you'll love this white hunk who cooks *adobo*."

Several e-mails later, plus a few phone calls from another friend (hey, Edward!) who hired Travis for a modeling gig, I still hadn't seen the video and had no idea what this guy was about.

It was not until about three hours before I our scheduled interview that I was finally able to see it (go to YouTube, enter Travis Kraft, and click on American Adobo).

The video is actually informative and funny. Of course, most Filipinos (or *Pinoy*s) know how to cook *adobo*. If you have all the basic ingredients (meat, garlic cloves, onions, bay leaves, peppercorns, vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, water), it's very easy to make. But the fact that Travis does so and talks in Filipino is what makes the video unique and lovable.

Travis even makes use of words that not many Filipinos born here are familiar with like *sangkutsahin* (which means to sauté), and which cannot be found in the average Tagalog to English dictionary available in the internet. He ends the video with "Ang sarap-sarap!" (which means very delicious) after taking a bite from the *adobo* arranged in a bowl.

As I drove to meet Travis, I thought to myself, what gives? Why did this guy decide to make a video about cooking *adobo*, a decidedly *Pinoy* dish? Is he half-*Pinoy* or part-*Pinoy*? Does he have a *Pinoy* wife or girlfriend?

As it turns out, Travis Kraft is

100% white... yup, a six-footer, blue-eyed, full-blooded American born in Iowa and raised in North Dakota who was a wrestler in high school, graduated with a bachelor's degree in Telecommunications and Film from Eastern Michigan University, and is now a model/actor living in Hollywood, California.

More than that, Travis, who has visited the Philippines a couple of times and has done billboard work for Jockey and Rexona, is a lover of many things *Pinoy*—the food, the culture, the islands, the people, and, yes, for all of you women out there enjoying the single life, the girls.

So how did he get the idea for the YouTube video?

"I was in the Philippines meeting with an executive at GMA-7 when I saw a poster for their program, *Mobile Kusina*," Travis relates to the Asian Journal. "I told them I could be a guest at the program and they can ask me to cook an American delicacy since I am a trained cook. Nothing came out of it as the executive probably thought I was pulling her leg."

He continues: "Back in Los Angeles, I wanted to brush up on my filmmaking skills and on one Thanksgiving, I thought I'd do a cooking show in Filipino. I didn't even know what I was going to cook that day. It just came to me. I shot the video myself, edited it in 30 minutes, and put it up on YouTube and a couple of other sites."

By his reckoning, the video has had more than a million views in total, including ones that have been taken down due to copyright infringement.

Still, he's awed by the way

people, particularly *Pinoy*s, have taken to the video.

"I didn't even tell anybody about the video," he reveals. "Somehow people began finding it and shared it with their friends. I never thought it would get to be this big thing."

Travis says most of the reaction to the video is positive, with some even containing marriage proposals. But he also gets the occasional negative hit where viewers think he's disrespectful to Filipino culture or that he's a racist.

"I am neither (racist nor disrespectful)," he proudly states. "I have always been fascinated with Far Eastern cultures since I was young. I went to Asia after graduation, and I stayed in the Philippines the longest. I have a lot of extended family in my adoptive mother's country. I am genuinely impressed with Filipino culture and I hope I can promote Filipino culture to friends and other people."

And how did he learn to speak Filipino?

"I bought some language book tapes from Borders," he confesses. "I studied Tagalog for about six to seven months. When I was in the Philippines, I would go to places where people spoke the language so I would be forced to do so. I know I don't have it down yet, and I have a funny accent, but it's okay."

After the simple YouTube video, Travis' next project *Pinoy* project is *Salo Salo*, a bigger budget DVD that is currently in postproduction and may become available by the end of July.

Travis promises that *Salo Salo* is funnier and is a unique take on an instructional cooking

video. He is co-producing the video with Madley Katarungan, Manuel Santiago and Lance Keefer. His co-stars include Tim Javines, Christine Calacson, Romeo Cristal, Yce Tan, Joyce Kao, Miki Hayashi and Aaron Robinson. The DVD is the first project of his company, Pool Boy Films.

"This is the first time that I am making use of my degree," the easygoing actor/model says. "I had worked on a Cheetah Girls video before for Disney, but in this project I wore so many hats. After this gets out, I will go back to making the smaller, YouTube-kind videos. And somewhere down the line, I'd like to shoot a movie and do some TV work."

For now, Travis is firmly planted in Los Angeles as he tries to keep his Hollywood career going. Currently, he is in meetings with a major studio for a movie role. His resume includes the commercial for FX's *Dirt* starring Courteney Cox-Arquette, and a shoot with Lindsay Lohan for Harper's Bazaar where he donned superhero costumes.

He's also planning to go back to the Philippines (where he is actually known for his print and commercial work), and may visit Samar and Leyte, aside from the usual places he frequents. Travis says he misses the Philippines.

And what does he like the most about the Philippines?

"What I like about the Philippines is the people," he says, "not just the food, the places, and the hospitality. Also, it's such a beautiful place. I like it that Filipinos are proud of their friendliness. You know, they will give the shirt off their backs... that's the kind of people Filipinos are." ■

salo-salo

TRAVIS KRAFT



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## The Duel of the Divas



Lani Misalucha

Starmedia Entertainment presents *The Main Event*, another fabulous production in the offering on September 13, 2008 (Saturday) at the Nob Hill Masonic Civic Auditorium at 8:30 p.m. This is the unbeatable team-up of two of the greatest divas in Asia...Asia's Songbird, Ms. Regine Velasquez and Asia's Nightingale, Ms. Lani Misalucha.

Asia's Songbird, Regine Velasquez, is a multi-awarded Filipino singer and actress is well-known for her belting prowess which has been noted for its range, power and technical ability and also for her versatility and reinvention.

Asia's Nightingale, Lani Misalucha, performs pop, rock, jazz, soul, rhythm and blues and operatic arias and is currently bested all other female singers in Vegas. She just got awarded as the best singer in Strip. Her vocal range is about 4 octaves! She possesses comedic flair and can affectively impersonate well-known divas.

To even add an extra punch to this back-to-back concert, Special Guest Martin Nievera will be a wonderful addition to the already stellar line-up because we all know him as the Philippines' Concert king. Not only that, he has already done successful stints in Las Vegas at the Golden Nugget and Rio Hotel among others.

Watch for this biggest showdown of the divas and we will see the supreme

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Regine Velasquez

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