

Krissa Mae Arrieta

GoBingo Girl

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL / AJPress

SHE is one of the Philippines upcoming stars. Fil-Am Krista Kleiner better known for her Filipino stage name Krissa Mae Arrieta has already co-hosted on the GMA-7 show *GoBingo* and has a supporting role in the GMA-7 show *Gagambino*.

The 19-year-old Fil-Am is trying to make it in the world of Philippine show business. And so far she is on the cusp of stardom.

As the *GoBingo* girl, she co-hosted with Filipino star Arnel Ignacio. In *Gagambino*, she plays a martial arts expert and co-stars with Filipino celebrities Katrina Halili and Dennis Trillo. She's also starred in a number of reality game shows like *Pacman's Challenge*.

She is also being considered to be in the Filipino version of *Shall We Dance*, a competitive dance show in the Philippines later this year.

Not a bad resume for a 19-year-old who has been in Philippine showbiz for only one year.

"I love my work so much," said Kleiner to the *Asian Journal*. "Things right now are really great."

Kleiner recently went back home to OC after a year in the Philippines.

Known for her height and mestiza look, Kleiner was born and raised in Orange County, California. Kleiner's mother is Filipino and her father is an American with German and British roots. Both are schoolteachers, according to Kleiner.

Kleiner said she was born to perform.

Talent scouts recognized Kleiner early as a possible child TV star but Kleiner's parents insisted that she should have a regular childhood.

"My parent's spoke to some psychologists and they didn't want me to be a child star and have a messed up childhood," said Kleiner. "They wanted me to go to school and if I really wanted to do showbiz to wait

until after I turned 18. It would be my decision."

By the time she was eighteen, she may not have done any professional work but she built up her experience.

Besides having straight A's, she did four years of runway modeling work, competed in Latin Ballroom dancing, sing and dance competitions, and also holds a black belt in Taekwondo.

A GMA-7 talent scout noticed Kleiner after she won the Miss Philippines-USA title in 2007. The scout was impressed with not only Kleiner's look but also her ability to speak fluent Tagalog.

"Even before I was born my mom felt like it was important to teach me how to speak Tagalog," said Kleiner. "She felt like learning the language would help me maintain the Filipino values of respecting the parents and family and friends."

At first she was reluctant to go. She had just graduated high school and had been accepted to UC San Diego. She wanted to pursue a Psychology degree.

But a GMA-7 executive gave her an offer she couldn't refuse.

GMA-7 signed her to an exclusive contract and would help her fulfill her dreams as a performer.

"It was tough at first," said Kleiner about the move to the Philippines. "It was the first year living on my own and I was living across the world. I really grew and matured going through the hard times and missing my friends and family."

But the move allowed Kleiner to focus on her entertainment career.

She said she loves Filipino show business because of the flexibility it allows its stars.

"Forme, I really like performing arts in general," said Kleiner. "I love singing, dancing and acting. I felt like out here in the states you kind of have to pick one and focus on that and if an actress tries to [pursue] singing, people say, 'oh just because she's an actress she thinks she can sing now.'"

"In the Philippines it's the opposite," she added. "They expect you to be able to do everything. The more you do, the more they like you; the more successful you are, the more commercials you get and so on. I could never pick out here [in the US]. I didn't just want to do one thing because I love it all so much. Out there in the Philippines, it's perfect for me. They let me do everything that I love to do."

Kleiner said that she still has a long way to go. Only 19-years-old, she admits she's not where she wants to be yet.



Galing Pinoy showcases the triumph of the Filipino spirit—the Filipino's innate perseverance to rise above. A double entendre, **Galing Pinoy** literally translates to both coming from (or brought to you by) the Filipino and Filipino ingenuity.



She said that breaking into Philippine showbiz is not as easy as it looks. Many Fil-Ams think just because they have a certain look that they could make it in the Philippines but it's a lot tougher, said Kleiner.

"If you don't have talent or if you don't know the language, it's only a matter of time before people start to get sick of you," said Kleiner. "Yes, it may be

easier to get in the business if you have a mestiza look but it won't last if you don't have any talent to keep the people entertained."

Kleiner added that if breaking into Philippine show business is truly that person's passion, then go for it.

"Life is too short to have a dream and not give yourself a shot," said Kleiner. "To live

your life knowing that there is something that you really want to do but you didn't believe in yourself enough to try, you'll carry that [thought] with you the rest of your life... believe in yourself and put in the effort."

Kleiner went back to the Philippines last week. She said that she'd continue to work hard to make her dreams into a reality. ■

No limit to the Filipino...

PAGE 1 ◀

Filipino spirit."

"When I ran across the Philippines," Joy recalled, "people asked me 'what is your goal?' And I said, 'I just want to reach Pagudpud running, that's all.' I didn't want to walk or to ride or to crawl. I want to reach Pagudpud running and, by some amazing miracle, I actually did after 2000 kilometers."

Dream Run

Upon achieving her goal, Joy thought of another, one that would top the last. So on May 11, on her 44th birthday, she plans to be the first Southeast Asian woman to cross the United States.

This Trans-USA run, known as *Takbong Pangarap (Dream Run)*, will begin in Eagle Rock, California and continue through to Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey until she reaches New York City.

Joy is expected to arrive at the Philippine Consulate on Fifth Avenue on September 8. By then, she will have run an estimated 5000 kilometers in 120 days, 20 of which will be spent for resting.

"The goal is the same," said Joy at the launch of the *Takbong Pangarap* channel on www.thepoc.net. "It's to reach New York running. And I hope I'll still be in one piece after 5000 kilometers," she smiled.

Takbong Pangarap will also see Joy reuniting with her *Hakbang Pangarap* trainer and running partner Mateo Macabe, as well as team manager Chuck Crisanto.

Unlike in the *Hakbang Pangarap*, however, Mat will not be able to run with Joy the entire course after he underwent open-heart surgery in 2008, but he will be her pacer and navigator. He will also take turns manning the *Takbong Pangarap* support vehicle with Chuck. Mat is a story of resiliency in his own right.

Aside from pursuing her own dream, Joy will also share her endeavor with the Filipino people. During the course of 12 states, the *Takbong Pangarap* team will make contact with the different Filipino communities along the way.

Asked if her supporters in the US would be allowed to run side by side with her, Joy answered smiling "Definitely!" Chuck said this would help inspire others about the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle.

Another goal of the dream run is to raise funds for two beneficiaries: the Anti-TB Program of the Inner Wheel Club of Quezon City District 378 and the Social Services Division of the Philippine Heart Center.

"So many people have helped us make our dream come true and now, it's our turn to make other people's dream come true," shared Joy.

Realizing the dream

Joy and the *Takbong Pangarap* team plan to accomplish all these goals through hard work and determination.

But realizing the dream run lies in the support of the people, too, whether through donating to the *Takbong Pangarap* fund or hosting the team while they pass through your area.

People can also be a 5K sponsor. By donating \$100, five kilometers of the run will be dedicated to Joy's supporters, as she will attach a running bib where their own aspirations will be written.

"Manny Pacquiao, he's a prize fighter. He's an athlete but there's a big prize waiting for him at the end of the fight," Chuck recounted, "Joy Rojas is not a prize runner. At the end of the road, it's just [about] accomplishing something."

Joy is known for pushing herself to greater distances and achieving higher goals with each endeavor.

"That's the reason that drives you and the passion that drives her as well," he said.

For more information on how to help the *Takbong Pangarap* team, visit www.thepoc.net. ■



“Why pay more?

Simple...

Atty. Gurfinkel is very persistent, makulit, talagang hindi niya binibitawan ang case.”

-Christopher de Leon
AWARD WINNING ACTOR

To schedule a phone or in-person consultation, call

Toll free 1 (866) 487-3465

1 (866) GURFINKEL

MICHAEL
GURFINKEL
LAW OFFICES

A Full Service Immigration Law Firm

www.gurfinkel.com

LOS ANGELES • SAN FRANCISCO • NEW YORK • PHILIPPINES

Michael J. Gurfinkel is licensed, and an active member of the State Bar of California and New York. All immigration services are provided by, or under the supervision of an active member of the State Bar of California. Each case is different. The information contained herein, including testimonials, "Success Stories" or endorsements are of general nature, and not intended to apply to any particular case, and do not constitute a prediction, warranty, guarantee or legal advice regarding the outcome of your legal matter. No attorney-client relationship is, or shall be, established hereby.