



**Can you provide us with short biography of yourself?**

I am Ralph C. Matres, born last May 7, 1977 I have a wife, a four year old son and a one year old daughter. We all live in a city called Ormoc, in the province of Leyte, East Central Philippines. I took up accountancy in college and I graduated last 1998. I also finished my EMBA last year.

**How did you hear about Tasweery (MScamera) group on flickr? When did you join?**

I got an invitation early last year and I haven't stopped posting since.

**Do you know any arabic?**

I don't. Since I couldn't read the threads, it actually took me a few months to find out that the group changed its name from MS Camera to Tasweery. When I couldn't find MS Camera in the group list, I thought that I have been dropped from the group. Funny but true =)

**What is it like to be a photographer in the Philippines? How do people look at you as a photographer? What are the difficulties that you face?**

The Philippines is a beautiful place to take pictures. It really is a photographer's paradise when you talk about nature. Because it is a tropical country, there are lots of breathtaking mountain views as well as lakes, waterfalls and beaches in our 7,107 islands. The people

here are very warm, friendly and hospitable. If you are a portrait photographer you wouldn't have any problems with the people because they will be more than willing to have their pictures taken.

On the other hand, the Philippines is a country where intellectual property rights are not taken seriously. Piracy is common here and photos sometimes get copied/used without permission.

**When and how did you start photography? Is photography your profession? If you have another job, what is it and how do you find time for photography?**

I started getting serious last August 2006, when I bought my first (and is still my only) DSLR. I was blown away by its flexibility and the many things that you can do with it, things that you cannot normally do in a point and shoot camera. When I got the DSLR I was amused at how I can use background blur to make people/portraits stand out. I've always wanted to simulate the silky flow of the water as well as freezing action like the pictures in magazines and when I found out that I could do it.....I never stopped shooting.

After college I worked as an accountant for nine years until my employer folded up its operations late last year. Now I'm trying to set up a business (in agriculture/farming) which will hopefully start by the later part of the year.

I would like to go out and shoot more often but unfortunately my family, with my growing children requires a lot of attention. Most of my pictures were taken during my biking trips outside the city. I cram my photography when I go out on trails to exercise.

**What are you trying to express and say through your photos?**

Hopefully when people see my photos they will come to recognize how beautiful my country is. Sometimes people send comments and express their willingness to come over and see the beauty here....that makes me really glad. Somehow the photography medium has allowed me to show the beauty of my country and in my little way, I feel that I somehow made a contribution. The Philippines may not enjoy a favorable reputation among other nations when it comes to its economic and political condition but there are a lot other good things here beside those.



**Do you know that you were the first runner up in last year's Admin Choice in Tasweery (2007/2008) and that only one point separated you from the first place winner? How does that make you feel?**

I didn't know that. It's a great honor. I am a fan of Tasweery because of the many great photographers here. The quality of the pictures in the group pool is outstanding and it comes as a pleasant surprise to have been chosen as a runner up and for that I am humbly honored.

**What camera do you use? Are you satisfied with it? What camera/lens do you wish to buy next?**

I still use the same camera that I bought last August 2006. A Rebel XT 350d with a 50mm 1.8 and 17-85 4-5.6 IS. The walk around lens is too slow and I have trouble getting pictures in low light. I also don't have any telephoto lens as well as a wide angle lens so it's safe to say that I am far from being satisfied. My camera also has a burst rate of 2.8 fps which is too slow. It doesn't have spot metering and its highest usable ISO is only at 800. I could go on and on about its limitations but what can a poor man do. =)

My wish is to get a full frame camera but the 5D is out of my range financially so I'll probably be getting myself a 40D if I have the money. For a full frame my dream lens would be a 16-35 2.8L. I'd love to start going into documentary shots, plus the wide angle would be a bonus for taking landscapes. Another lens on my wish list is a 70-200 2.8 L IS, but realistically speaking I would maybe get a third party lens because it is all that I can afford.

**What advice would you give to anyone who is interested in photographing in the Philippines?(legally, socially, culturally, environmentally..etc.)**

It's a democratic country so except maybe in some private institutions which may ban

photography, everybody is free to take pictures almost everywhere. Like I said the people here are very warm and friendly so there won't be any problems dealing with the locals. The country is predominantly catholic and a lot of churches here have existed for more than a century so our country is a great hunt for architectural photographers who want to capture the grandeur of these holy structures.

For those who want to capture the rural life (like I do), the countryside here is lush with greenery. Rice fields, corn and sugar plantations extend beyond horizons. The country's terrain is also ideal for river trekking as well as mountain climbing. I'm sure lots of photography can be inserted when doing these outdoor activities.

### **Which of your pictures do you feel is closer to you? Why?**

I just love taking pictures of people, especially the people in rural areas who work as fishermen and farmers. These are my heroes, they work very hard under intense conditions and I never see or hear them complain. Even though they have less material things in life, it does not stop them from being happy and their outlook of life is incredible. With the event of technology and the comfort that it brings to our lives, these peoples needs are very simple and basic and when I see them I am reminded of how lucky I am and how blessed I am.

The one picture that I feel is close to my heart would be this one:



There's nothing technically special with this shot. I actually think that the shutter speed is a bit slow on this one (as evidenced by a bit of blur due to the movement), but something about this photo makes me think of my childhood. How fun, carefree and enjoyable it was to be a child. This makes me look back and remember the good old days.

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For [www.Tasweery.com](http://www.Tasweery.com)

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The photographer's flickr page:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jeridaking/>