



Presidential aspirant Sen. Grace Poe (right) is warmly welcomed by residents of Roxas City in Capiz during her campaign sortie on Feb. 17. (Photo by Jay Morales)

Contributed to the Filipino Reporter

When I first heard Grace Poe was running for President, first question that came to mind is her age thinking of course that she may be too young.

That or I may have been out of the Philippines way too long that hardly anything in my home country has aged or changed in my mind.

So I looked up past presidents and found out that Emilio Aguinaldo, generally accepted as the country's 1st president, was only 30 years old when he held office.

Ramon Magsaysay was only 46 and Ferdinand Marcos 48 when they became presidents.

So Aguinaldo is definitely much younger than Grace while Magsaysay and Marcos were closer to Grace's age today.

Maturity and life experience count in this election.

As the sole adopted child of legendary Fernando Poe and Susan Roces I can easily pinpoint the admirable character traits Grace has inherited from these two icons.

Hands down she has the charisma of her father and the peace and serenity of her mother.

Grace also has a simplicity and no-nonsense wisdom in her that seems to escape many of the brats bred by the affluent.

I first met her at UP Manila as a college freshman (I think I was a junior) wearing the same white shirt and denims she still dons most of the time to this day.

I would like to think of myself then as a "*tibak*" and not the type the socialites in the campus would care for or be seen dead with (and I still don't give a damn).

But not Grace.

She was very down-to-earth and hang on to every word I was mumbling during their leadership training and during our long enduring campaign for the student council.

Respect and diplomacy count in this election.

One of my brilliant ideas for fundraising back in the days was to go “caroling” with the student leadership and our good old chums.

We practiced some only to prove that we were better giving speeches than anything else.

We went to sing Christmas carols at the Poe residence where our horrible voices resonated in their pristine and quiet home and made out like bandits with their generosity.

Grace and members of their household should have kicked us all out on the first note but they smiled and stuck through our entire gig.

Kindness and generosity count in this election.

I have followed Grace’s career through the years and am consistently impressed by her platform and leadership.

I’ve seen her struggle through the election defeat and death of her most beloved father and listened to her bring comfort to her countrymen in her own grief.

Rising above your own circumstances without bitterness and vengeance count in this election.

And now as they question her origin and weave all these stories about her true identity and citizenship I see her stay on point and without rest fight for what she believes is right and fair.

Strength of character counts in this election.

Yep.

GRACE POE COUNTS IN THIS ELECTION.

(Editor's note: The author, currently based in Philadelphia, is a graduate of the University of the Philippines, Manila.)