Two presidents inspired me in my business career—President Diosdado P. Macapagal, the ninth President of the Republic of the Philippines, and Mr. Panfilo O. Domingo, the fifteenth President of Philippine National Bank (PNB). Both rose from humble beginnings but reached the pinnacle of their respective careers through honesty, hard work, and humility. They attributed their success to God as blessings and as stewardships. Both were of strong minds and great advocates of leadership by example. They had the knack of tapping good people to the right positions. They commanded respect since they were always well groomed, proper in speech and decorum. They were persuasive speakers because they spoke from the heart. They were loyal, trustworthy, and were grateful for even the smallest things done for them.

My father, President Macapagal, was loving, compassionate, thoughtful, kind, gentle, and patient. He got things done because he was a charming and diplomatic person. He never “passed the buck” but practiced command responsibility.

My father impressed upon me the virtues of honesty and trustworthiness at an early age. When I was eight years old, I used his new portfolio to school without his permission. When my father found out and I tried to make excuses, he held my shoulders and looked me in the eyes and said, “Remember this all your life. Always tell the truth and never take anything that does not belong to you, even if it belongs to a member of your family.” When I was twelve, I forgot to do something I promised my father. He reprimanded me and said, “If you promise to do something, do it. If you cannot do it, tell the person
right away, so he can ask someone else to do it for him.”

He also taught me to respect everyone. “You can learn something even from a balut vendor,” he added. After my father became President, he found out I was working in the Commission on Audit. He told me “When you are in government, you must learn to sacrifice. Remember, honesty is the best policy. Always do your job well and you will never look for a job. The job will look for you.”

During my father’s term as president, our country was the most advanced nation in the whole of Asia next only to Japan. He prepared himself for his position. He valued education deeply. He was a Bar topnotcher, finished a Ph.D. in Law and in Economics while teaching, practicing law, and in public office. He encouraged me to take up an M.A. in Economics at the Ateneo even after ten years of married life. It was truly a struggle studying and working and raising a family of four at that time. Next to God, I owe my career to my father.

Mr. P.O.D., as Panfilo Domingo was fondly called, was strict in the office but was a warm and friendly person after office hours. He expected excellent service to customers with a smile. He was quick to reward personnel for a job well done and was generous in giving promotions, bonuses and benefits that would improve the quality of life of the Philnabankers (PNB employees). He promoted cultural and sports activities that enhanced PNB’s image in the business community and made sure PNB had social responsibility. During Mr. Domingo’s term as president, PNB was the no. 1 commercial bank in the Philippines. Philnabankers and customers were “Nakasandal sa Pader”.

Mr. Domingo also valued education highly. He was a Certified Public Accountant (C.P.A.), a magna cum laude graduate yet he pursued graduate studies where he was president of University of the East (UE), when he no longer had to prove himself. Mr. Domingo was also a caring person with a great sense of humor. When I was being treated for malignant cancer in 1982 at the Manila Doctors Hospital, he instructed the physicians of PNB, against their wishes, to assign to me the doctors that I requested. He called me up and in his usual authoritative voice said: “Cielo, you are still alive and some people are already after your job. Get well soon and come back to work. That’s an order!” I could only reply with “Yes sir!”

To me what is most significant is how their lives ended in their
eighties. They were true witnesses of Jesus Christ. They glorified God in their personal and public lives for their lives were an act of worship. They truly loved God, country and family.

Like St. Paul, they can truly claim:
I have fought the good fight
I have finished the race
I have kept the faith. (2 Tim. 4:7)

President Diosdado Macapagal

Panfilo O. Domingo

Cielo M. Salgado is the eldest daughter of the late Philippine President Diosdado P. Macapagal and the late Purita dela Rosa Macapagal. She has been the Chairman of PNB General Insurers Company, Inc. since 2002.