

A Husband's Sacrificial Love

In 1990, Dr. Robertson McQuilkin made a courageous decision that has impacted an understanding of love in the hearts of many.

McQuilkin stepped down from the presidency of Columbia Bible College and Seminary (now Columbia International University) after 22 years in the job to care full-time for his ailing wife, Muriel, who had Alzheimer's disease.

McQuilkin, whose father was Columbia's first president, met Muriel when they were both students there. During their 55-year marriage, they raised six children and served for 12 years as missionaries in Japan. Both eventually worked at Columbia – Muriel taught and McQuilkin became the president in 1968.

Ten years before his decision to leave the presidency, Muriel had repeated a story to some friends while vacationing in Florida. That began a process of medical attention that ultimately proved she had the disease. McQuilkin suggested the board should begin the search for a successor – yet everyone hoped he could continue until retirement. Some wise and good friends encouraged him to consider institutional care. They, too, loved Muriel, but they also saw God's hand and calling on McQuilkin's leadership at the school.

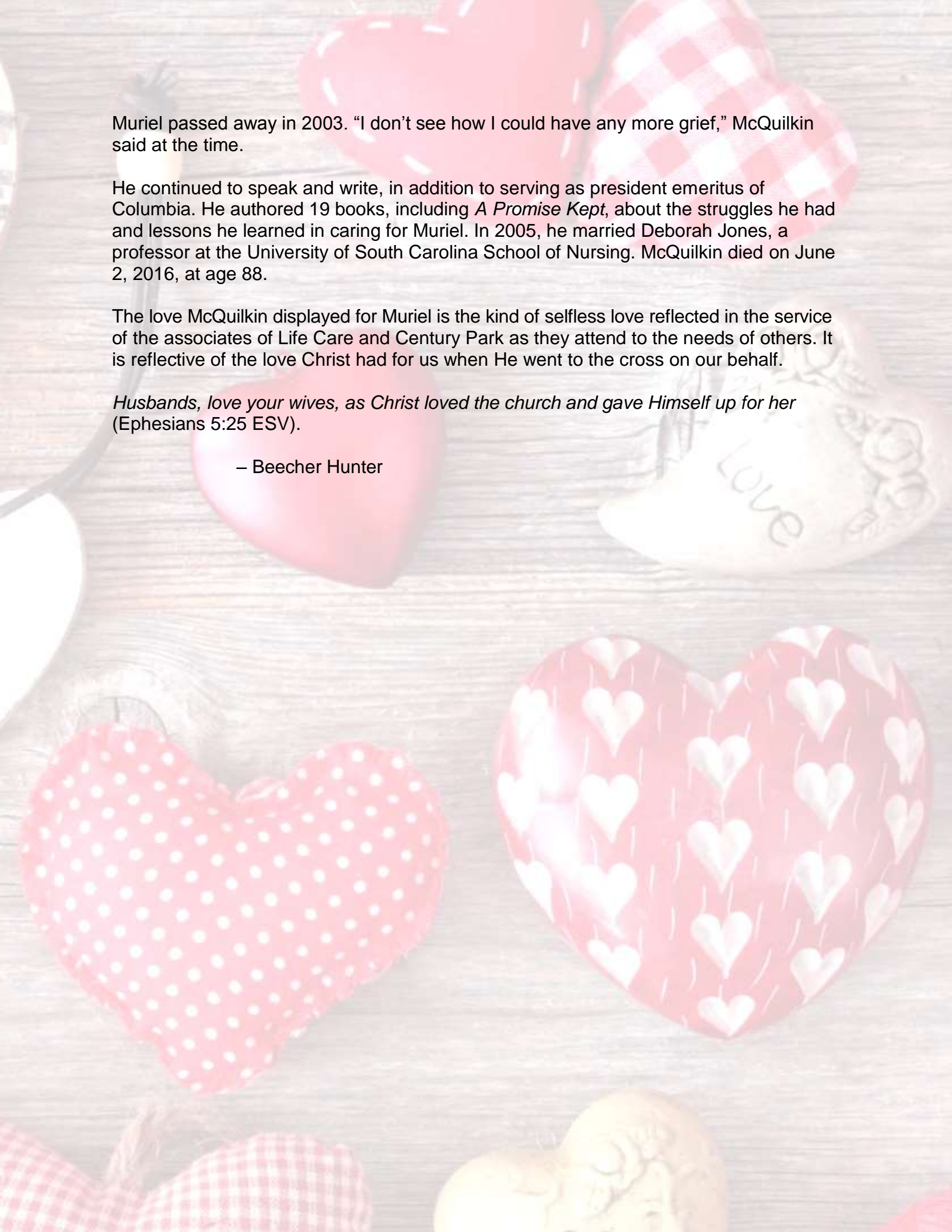


For several years, he tried to juggle the challenge by using a caregiver during the day while he went to work. With amazing love, Muriel would try to follow him to school. The walk was one-half mile, and she would make that trip as many as 10 times a day. After losing her ability to speak in intelligible sentences, she maintained the capacity in her actions to regularly tell her husband, "I love you."

Sometimes, while preparing her for bed, McQuilkin would find blood on her feet from the incessant walks. He knew a decision had to be made; yet, in his mind, the decision was resolved 42 years earlier when he vowed "in sickness and in health, till death do us part."

McQuilkin walked away from a thriving ministry and many unfulfilled dreams, but there was no regret. "This was no grim duty to which I stoically resigned," he said. "It was only fair. She had, after all, cared for me for almost four decades with marvelous devotion; now it was my turn. I don't *have* to care for her, I *get* to," he said. "If I took care of her for 40 years, I would never be out of her debt."

(more)



Muriel passed away in 2003. “I don’t see how I could have any more grief,” McQuilkin said at the time.

He continued to speak and write, in addition to serving as president emeritus of Columbia. He authored 19 books, including *A Promise Kept*, about the struggles he had and lessons he learned in caring for Muriel. In 2005, he married Deborah Jones, a professor at the University of South Carolina School of Nursing. McQuilkin died on June 2, 2016, at age 88.

The love McQuilkin displayed for Muriel is the kind of selfless love reflected in the service of the associates of Life Care and Century Park as they attend to the needs of others. It is reflective of the love Christ had for us when He went to the cross on our behalf.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter