

The Shedding of Tears

Edmund Muskie died on March 26, 1996. The Democratic politician from Maine served as a senator, governor and U.S. Secretary of State.

In 1968, he was paired with Hubert Humphrey on the Democratic presidential ticket, but the team lost to Richard Nixon by 0.7 percentage points, one of the narrowest margins in U.S. history. He went on to run in the 1972 presidential election.

As political analysts have evaluated his career, they consistently go back to a snow-covered day in February of 1972. That's the day on which many think Muskie experienced the turning point of his political future.



He was campaigning for a run at the presidency just before the New Hampshire primary. On the back of a flatbed truck, he addressed a crowd in heavy, falling snow.

In his speech, Muskie commented on an article in the *Union Leader* newspaper that attacked his wife. In defense of his wife, the presidential hopeful became choked up and displayed his emotions. Even to this day, there is debate as to whether or not he actually cried or if it was just melting snow dripped down his face, which is the explanation Muskie gave. The press reported it as Muskie crying.

Regardless of where the water started, the perception (or reality) of tears caused political experts to think he was unstable and might crack under pressure.

Muskie would write of that day, “It changed people’s minds about me. They were looking for a strong, steady man, and here I was weak.”

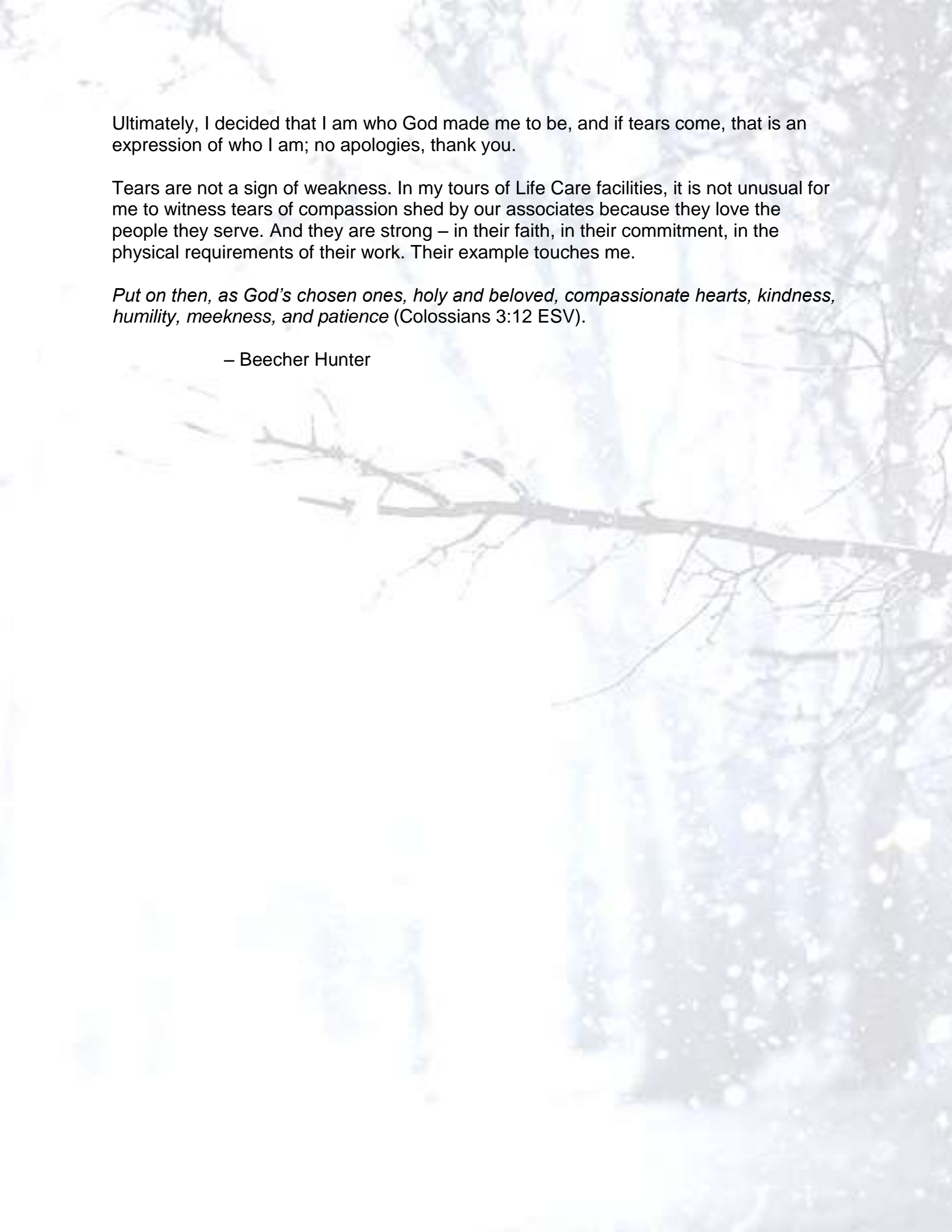
George McGovern won the Democratic nomination for president, and Muskie never got another chance.

During his presidency, Bill Clinton reminded some chiding reporters, “Presidents have feelings, too.”

It is unfortunate that tears of sensitivity are seen as a weakness, and a stern demeanor is interpreted as strength.

In my case, inspirational and emotional situations often move me to tears. For years, on those occasions, I offered an apology to those who might be present.

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Ultimately, I decided that I am who God made me to be, and if tears come, that is an expression of who I am; no apologies, thank you.

Tears are not a sign of weakness. In my tours of Life Care facilities, it is not unusual for me to witness tears of compassion shed by our associates because they love the people they serve. And they are strong – in their faith, in their commitment, in the physical requirements of their work. Their example touches me.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience (Colossians 3:12 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter