Eulogy for Ralph Gabriel Raskas

*Delivered on December 26, 2016, by Ashwath Kumar at the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol Cemetery*

I had the pleasure of meeting Ralph during our first year of college at UMKC. It was pure chance, really. There were only two groups of med students on the second floor of the dorms, and our rooms were only 20 feet apart – it was only a matter of time before I met *the* Ralph Raskas.

From the moment I met Ralph, there were two qualities that I immediately began to appreciate about him. The first was his attitude. Inevitably, I would come to Ralph frustrated with one problem or another. And every time, Ralph would listen, wait for me to finish, and say the same two words: “Oh Ashwath”. And then he would laugh, the classic Ralph laugh. You see, Ralph lived by a simple philosophy: You can’t change the past, you don’t know what’s going to happen in the future, but right now, you can choose to be happy. And for the time I knew him, Ralph always chose to be happy, and when you were around him, it was easy to make the same choice.

Second was his consistency. Ralph’s door was always open. When times were good, Ralph was there, smiling. When times were bad, Ralph was there, smiling. When you needed someone to study with, Ralph was there, smiling. When you needed someone to have lunch with, Ralph was there, smiling. And when you needed to wake someone up at 4 a.m. in the morning to open the door because you locked yourself out of the dorms, Ralph was there…just there.

When I think of Ralph, I think of someone who gave far more than he asked. I think of his black jacket, his oversized sunglasses, and his perfectly cut wavy hair. Like I said, he was consistent. I also think of the photos. There were so many photos of Ralph. It seems that for every thing he did or every place he went, he had a photo. One day, while he was showing me some of his pictures, I asked him “Ralph, why do you have so many photos?” He turned to me and said “Well, someday these photos are all that you will have to remember”.

Well Ralph, someday came a little too soon. But now that I’ve had time to think about it, I have to disagree with you. You see, during that first year, Ralph and I spent many hours together. When I think back, I don’t know most of what we talked about – usually, it wasn’t important. I don’t know most of what we did – again, usually it wasn’t important. But what I do know is those times with Ralph were good times, happy times. As the saying goes, ‘people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel’. And Ralph, more than photos, things, or even memories, that feeling is what we will remember most about you.

I won’t try to find another Ralph. People like him are truly once in a lifetime. Instead, I will try to be someone else’s Ralph – to listen, to help, to care. I can’t change the past, I don’t know what lies ahead, but Ralph, right now I will try to be happy. Because I know that’s what you would have wanted. Because I know that you are in a better place. And because I know that you were and always will be…there, smiling.