

Good evening. My name is Shapir Rosenberg and I am tonight's alumni speaker.

In June of 1989 I graduated from the 6th grade at Herzl. That summer, in early July, my mom died on the oncology ward at the University of Colorado hospital. Six weeks later, I started in the 7th grade at RMHA.

I remember the first day of school, gathering for an orientation in the BMH chapel, where RMHA was then located. Ray Anderton was the principal. Mr. Hay was a young, bearded, serious-looking social studies teacher. Judy Sylvan taught English. I sat next to my classmates including Adam Oderberg, Eric Berson, Jen Pransky, and Libbi Levine. Jen, Libbi, and I would be in the graduating class of seven students six years later.

I don't recall my first time meeting Craig, but my earliest memories are of a tall skinny guy with an indentation in his nose and a protuberant Adam's apple. He was easily the tallest Jew I had ever encountered. I was probably the shortest 12-year-old he had. He was 29 at the time. (We'll come back to that 17-year difference later.) He had an engaging personality and an easy laugh. He was my gym teacher. But, like so many of my teachers at RMHA — and Herzl before that — they would come to be far more than their titles.

Gym class at BMH took place in one of two gymnasiums — the BMH social hall, or the outdoors sidewalk. In the former, Craig set a large gray trash receptacle on the top of the stage. This was our basketball court. Outside, he placed one bright orange cone some distance down by where the sidewalk disintegrated. This was our racetrack. He would dutifully escort us outside on warm days, take out a stopwatch, line us up, say "go," and watch us sprint as best we could towards the cone. He timed us, but I think we all got As. Where the sidewalk ends, Shel Silverstein might agree, is an inner space best left to each person for demarcation. Intuitively Craig likely had a sense of that.

On colder days we were inside, playing basketball as I mentioned, or walking on all fours, belly up, like little arthritic crabs, all while attempting to kick a giant inflated ball around the social hall. When the ball hit the ceiling and destroyed tiles, we all giggled. I did at least. In fact, giggling was an issue of mine. During those sprints outside, I rarely got far. Perhaps the absurdity of it all got to me in a way I couldn't express other than to delightfully giggle and convulse on the green grass next to our track. Regression at worst, sublimation at best, but Craig laughed along with, let me be, and made it all simply fun.

At some point during my seventh grade year, Craig began, for the first time in his life, to study Torah. He did so with the help of Meir Mark, Benji Last, and Howard Hoffman. As part of this process, Craig took it upon himself to learn Hebrew. Sometimes then, gym class became study hall, and we all did our Hebrew homework together — sharing and discovering, from and about each other — cellphone, SMART Board, WiFi, and tablet-free I should add. Just a class and their teacher, learning together. In this fundamental

way, in Craig's classroom, little has changed, and 30 years of students, and their offspring, are the better for it.

I have my own special memories of Craig from that time. In the hallways, outside of class on occasion, he would sneak around or on top of a door and spook me, causing me to run away in a giggle-frenzy. Other times I'd sit with him in synagogue — he attended EDOS on Holly Street. He was always there for me in a *minyan* when I, as an adolescent, needed to say *kaddish*. Without siblings, without a dad involved in my life, and then without a mom, I likely related to him as a much older brother. He was kind, playful, authentic, and caring. I was in need of all of that.

For the next five years, RMHA was at Beth Joseph synagogue on 8th Avenue. Craig continued to be my gym teacher and basketball coach. But, whereas my running and dribbling skills plateaued, and at a low level, our friendship grew. Amidst the turbulence of adolescence, compounded in my case by the unresolved grief of profound loss, Craig was teacher, confidant, mentor, and even at times refuge.

There was a unique parallel process. Craig in his early 30s and I in my teens, both trying to find our place. For Craig, Torah and Judaism were new but held out the promise of identity, and the warmth of stories, community, and song, all of which appealed to a tall guitar- and college basketball-playing former hippie from Houston with an uncanny natural gift for Aramaic rabbinic discourse. And I, well, I was seeking desperately for meaning in a world seemingly so without. I also loved learning Talmud, and I was good at it. And so Craig and I spent many hours learning together, struggling with life together, in and outside of school.

Craig continued teaching PE, often with his thick-as-thieves pal Jerry Rotenberg. In my ninth and tenth grade years, gym classes would schlep down to the park on Hale Parkway across from Rose Medical Center and spend the hour playing basketball, or walking, or just enjoying the sun or snow, outdoors, in a neighborhood, being teens. Later in high school, he became my Talmud teacher.

Remember that 17-year age difference from earlier? Well, when I turned 17 as a junior in 1994 and Craig turned 34 that year, he asked if he'd always be double my age. It was at that point we agreed it would be for the best if he stayed involved only in the sports and Judaic departments and left the math curriculum to others.

I'll show you nine photographs tonight. Here are 3 special ones from my Herzl days. The first is of Marty Caplan and I breaking ground on the new Herzl building in 1989. I was the student council president in sixth grade hence the photo op. The next is of me, Sheila Silverman, and Arnie Rotenberg at my sixth grade graduation. The final one is of my mom and I in the old Herzl building.

And here are three from my student years at RMHA.

Jon Lumerman, a member of the class of '92 wrote to me recently when he heard about tonight's dinner. Here's what he said: "Craig was more than just our coach or teacher — he was one of us. Craig became a fixture in many of our lives not just in school but in shul as well. We learned commitment, dedication and responsibility from Craig. I would often see him curled up with a Gemara wherever he was — sometimes at school, but even at McNichol's Sports Arena coaching a basketball game. Craig was never satisfied with half an effort — he challenged us, pushed us, and made us better people. Craig had an impact on every single one of us — and although some may have said this to him previously —I do not think he understands how much he has meant in our personal development, both as kids and adults. We carry lessons that we learned from him with us today and he helped us see that we could be more."

What was said about Craig can be said by so many students about their Denver Jewish Day School teachers, past and present. My understanding is that in those early days of RMHA, like those of Herzl, a small group of parents, teachers, community leaders, and donors, much like tonight's honorees, persisted in a vision to create an intellectually rigorous, emotionally supportive, and foundationally Jewish school for students of all backgrounds. Am I ever grateful they did. In fact, it was dinners like this, each and every year, that raised the funds to support this vision and create the beautiful school — and more importantly the extraordinary people — that are the product of a Denver Jewish Day School education. Their dedication, manifested as the giving of their time and resources, paralleled then, and still does, the commitment of the school's teachers to their students.

I graduated in 1995 with six other classmates. I'm thankful that Libbi and her family are here tonight as well as my Herzl classmates Adam Oderberg, Brett Ogin, and Dana Waldbaum. I'm appreciative that other former RMHA students, from classes above and below mine, are here including Garrett and Elke Barter, David Fishman, Rayna Wandel, and Julie Geller.

RMHA moved to the JCC in 1996 and then to its current location in 2002. For a brief time after I finished college, Craig and I worked together as colleagues at RMHA — I taught social studies, math, whatever Mr. Hay needed really, and Craig continued exclusively in Judaics, having put down his whistle years before on the hallowed ground of Halper Field. My time teaching at this school was laden with the beauty and meaning of working in the family business, imparting to a next generation all the wisdom and ways of being a people, a Jewish one and a Denver Jewish Day School one.

For the next 15 years, Craig settled into his current role in the Judaics department. Meanwhile, in the words of an Ozzy Osbourne song I liked as a teen called "Mama I'm Coming Home," I found myself lost and found and turned around. With an Ivy League honors degree in philosophy, I cleaned barbells at the Denver JCC, took care of goats and bunny rabbits at a Jewish camp in New Hampshire, and taught physics and math in

high schools in Boston and Jerusalem. I ultimately went to medical school and into residency, all the while embarking on an inner and outer odyssey to come to terms with the many losses of my life. Looking forward, I have 15 months of residency remaining. I started in Family Medicine, then switched to Psychiatry. I hope to do a fellowship in end-of-life care, a field called Hospice and Palliative Medicine.

Once, while teaching at RMHA in 2003, I attended a social event in Denver. Making conversation, someone asked what I taught. Just then Josh Lake, one of the current upper school administrators who happened to be at the party, interjected, "What does Mr. Rosenberg teach? He teaches teaching." Much like Josh Lake's comment then, I think my specialty will actually be doctoring. When one loses one's only parent at 12 to cancer, one knows what it is to be with the suffering, and the dying.

In ways that surprise some, teaching and doctoring are so very alike. The doctor, like the teacher, is closely watched. The manners, the words, a kind and empathic disposition, or not, are all so very noticed by patients, as they are by students. Irrespective of subject matter or academic prowess, in school there is powerful modeling of how to be a person, how to act with others. This is where this school excels. Teachers, like parents, mold character and shape lives.

Furthermore, whether the medium is math or Talmud, like whether one is in the gastroenterology or hematology or psychiatry clinic, one is granted the privilege of being with people in formative, delicate, and vulnerable moments. One is compelled to learn about others so as to best give of one's self. And, assuming a certain standard of technical competence, caring is the most efficacious approach, pedagogically or therapeutically.

A *NY Times* obituary from January of this year tells about Dr. Jimmie Holland, a psychiatrist and pioneer in the field of psycho-oncology, what you could think of as the emotional care of a cancer patient. They quote her as saying, "What the patient has always wanted, and still wants, is to know that this doctor cares about me."

I think the same is true of one's teachers. Inside and outside of school through the years, many students, myself included, would learn Judaic subjects in *chavruta* with Craig. The word "chavruta" is an Aramaic word meaning "friendship," or "companionship." It's apt, because learning is best when done with a caring other. Whether learning Hebrew grammar and hamentaschen crafting with Tami, calculating molar masses with Ms. Knowles, studying political systems with Mr. Hay, conducting geometric proofs with Paula Deutsch, or reading great novels with Mrs. Sylvan, there was a spirit of camaraderie, among students and teachers. On student council, in athletics, during annual color wars, the spirit of an accepting, caring community was pervasive. My Herzl years and my RMHA years were a sweetly cherished time, and frankly become ever more so as years go by.

At Denver Jewish Day School, my teachers cared. I might even say they loved me. And that made the difference. You see, patients speak of their beloved doctor, and students of their beloved coach or teacher. I think what precedes such characterization is an acceptance of, a caring for, and a striving or journeying with, one's students or patients. That, I believe, is the not-so-secret secret of good doctoring and good teaching.

I took a date to dinner one night some months ago in Baltimore. We were meeting Charlie Silver, RMHA class of 1994, who was in town for a conference. Charlie is the CEO of a biotech firm in San Francisco. During conversation, he and I were roll-calling former RMHA classmates and apprising each other of their whereabouts and accomplishments. Midway through, my date, a physician who attended a large suburban public school asked, "Gosh, how many people were in your high school? It seems like everyone who went to your school became successful in some way; no one in my old school is doing anything so great."

Indeed, for decades, this small school, much like the Jewish community worldwide, has produced a disproportionate share of contributors to the betterment of the world.

Earlier tonight, in Baltimore, I was inducted into the University of Maryland Medical Center chapter of the Gold Humanism Honor Society, a national group of medical students, residents, and faculty doctors recognized for compassionate, humanistic caregiving. Of over 900 residents and clinical fellows at my hospital, I was one of six voted into the society by senior medical students. I couldn't be there because I was here. But that is as it should be. Because here is where it began.

The caring and loving community that my mom wanted and found for me at Herzl years ago, and that I then experienced at RMHA after her death, contributed in large measure to who I am today and with effects, as teacher and doctor, that magnify. Craig and the abundance of teachers over the years that have stood and still stand in the front of classrooms at Denver Jewish Day School, going back to its founding, along with its administrators, are a rare gift to students who come here. Their care and love change lives for the better. They did mine.

In Judaic and secular classes alike one learns to critically, yet constructively, examine issues; one gains exposure to disciplines — their problems and methodologies — and is invited to integrate those approaches; one learns to strive for an ethical way; one learns to be a Jew, but more than that even. There can be a doctor, and then there's a doctor's doctor, the kind of caregiver a physician might want for himself or his own family member. So too here, at Denver Jewish Day School, I believe one learns not only what it means to be a Jew in a community of others, one learns to be a *mensch* of a Jew.

If my mom could be here tonight, she would thank you Craig, and all of my dear teachers, as I do, among them Mr. Hay, Jerry Rotenberg, Melanie Knowles, Tami Stitelman, Genie Ritthaler, Henya Bergmann, and Sheila Silverman, all of whom are here

tonight, as well as Judy Sylvan, Randi Lornell, Paula Deutsch, Karen Guth who lives in Israel, Zahava Koll, Amy Scott, and Judy Benson who died a few years ago. A number of you went out of your way to be here and I'm deeply touched. In particular, I wish to recognize one of my third grade teachers, Anita Curry, who drove from Kansas.

I thank you all for equipping my mind and heart and soul to be, and to contribute, in this world. That's what family does. Going to school here and visiting now, is being with family.

Relatedly, I wish to make mention of a recent loss in the Denver Jewish Day School family — Koby Gruenwald, a young man in the seventh grade whose life and death touched so many, including mine, even without having met him.

I have often noticed a framed Talmudic quote that Craig keeps in his home. It reads, "One who teaches another's child Torah is regarded by the tradition as one who gave birth to the child." I cannot say it better. For your passion, your love, and your care, I thank you and am honored to be here for you tonight.

The financial support that comes from events like this dinner sustains the school and enables students to have the profound educational experiences I described. On behalf of students past, present and future, thank you.

May you Craig, the school, its teachers, leaders, and administrators, the other honorees tonight, and everyone here, continue from strength to strength and for many good healthy years to come.