April 28, 1981

Dear Albert:

In relinquishing the post of Chairman of the Board after thirteen years in that office I wish to thank you for your wholehearted cooperation without which my efforts could not have been successful.

I was deeply moved and honored by the decision of the Board to elect me as its Honorary Chairman and I hope to continue to do all I can for the University in the future.

It is a matter of pride to me that I had a share in the selection of a most worthy successor as Chairman -- Robert H. Smith of Washington, D.C., an industrialist, banker and philanthropist who has distinguished himself in service to Israel and the University through the American Friends.

I am confident that Bob Smith will do an outstanding job for the University. The measure of his success will depend to a large extent on your help and your cooperation. I urge you to work closely with him, as you did with me, and to assist him to the fullest in meeting the problems and needs that lie ahead.

Again, let me extend my warmest personal thanks for all your help to me as Chairman.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

Sam Rothberg
Change of guard at Hebrew U.

By PHILIP GILLON
Jerusalem Post Reporter

command was the School for Pre-academic Studies for Disadvantaged Youngsters. "This was vital to enable these young people to play their rightful roles in Israeli society. It succeeded beyond our most sanguine hopes."

His last baby is the School for Overseas Students. "I hope that thousands of overseas students will come to Israel to study," he says. "A student needn't be integrated by the Jewish Agency, he integrates himself. Either he stays, or he may come back later to settle. It's a very important way of promoting aliyah."

"A by-product of this programme that I'm now promoting is bringing high school students from abroad to the university during the summer vacation, in the hope that they'll consider Israel as a place where they will complete their education."

A BIOGRAPHY of Robert H. Smith given to me by the university tells me that he was born in 1928; he graduated from the University of Maryland, majoring in accounting; he is president of a building corporation and an insurance agency, and director of a bank; he is a trustee of the National Portrait Gallery, the International Exhibitions Foundation and the George Washington University; he is chairman of the Board of Governors of State of Israel Bonds in Washington, D.C., and a life member and past president of the Greater Washington Jewish Community Foundation.

All this seems to me to add up to a very formidable list of accomplishments, but Rothberg shakes his head pertinently and says that it does not do his successor justice.

"You write down that he and his family are involved in everything that affects Jewish life in Washington and Israel. His father started it and brought up the two Bobs — this one and his brother-in-law Bob Kogod — to follow in a tradition of communal service." The strengths of the Smiths is that they find out what has to be done in the community and then divide up the work between them. They're among the largest contributors to the UJA and among the largest buyers of Bonds. And they are very active in the Americans Friends of the Hebrew University in Washington, which is our most active branch."

I turn to Bob Smith. "Was this the line of talk Sam used to con you into taking on the job of Chairman?"

He bridles, then smiles. "I wasn't conned into it by Sam. I took it on purely as a decision made of my own free will after very deep consideration."

"In my opinion, the Hebrew University represents the values that have enabled the Jewish people to survive. Those civilizations that have left only physical monuments have all perished. I believe that ideas and the free interchange of ideas are vital to the survival of the Jewish people, so I was very pleased to be given a chance to serve the university."

NOW THAT the building programme has been completed, the nature of the demands on the chairman of the board may change. Rothberg talked about new dimensions for the post: I wondered whether Smith agreed with this view.

"There probably will be different emphases. Now we have to make certain that all the buildings are used to their fullest extent. In other words, we must strengthen the faculty infrastructure of equipment, books, research funds, and so on."

Such a move will certainly be welcomed by the teachers and research students, who have been complaining for several years now about the lack of facilities.

"They are right. It was inevitable that the problem would arise in an institution dependent on the government for 75 per cent of its budget, at a time of great financial stringency."

On the sordid subject of raising money, I suggest that he may find it was easier to raise money for buildings with plaques on them than it will be to cover research and teaching expenses.

"This was certainly true in the past. But I think that today people are much more sophisticated and understand that it is not enough to give buildings, it is essential to see that they are fully and correctly used. You must bear in mind that many Friends of the University today are second generation donors, most of whom are university graduates themselves. I don't want to take anything away from the magnificent work done by the first generation of supporters, of course, but needs have changed and people nowadays realize this."

His biography indicates a great interest in art and in George Washington University. Is he considering pushing some form of art courses at the Hebrew University, where there is at present only a history of art course?

"No. I'm interested in George Washington University because my wife, who is an art teacher, teaches there, and two of my sons were graduated from there. But I have no such project in mind for the Hebrew University."

"I would like to stress in conclusion why I consider the Hebrew University to be so important. Nations may be defeated and destroyed on battlefields, so a country like Israel has to defend herself. But physical survival alone is not enough: the country's future is based on the classrooms. Israel has to combine the qualities of Sparta, Athens, and, of course, Jerusalem. It's a very tall order, and we must help her to do it."

Apart from being so thoughtful and so dedicated, the incoming chairman has one further excellent quality: he is a very keen tennis player.