

# Canadians At The Hebrew University

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—David Roskies, a Canadian, gives his impressions of Israel and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

by Richard Oestermann

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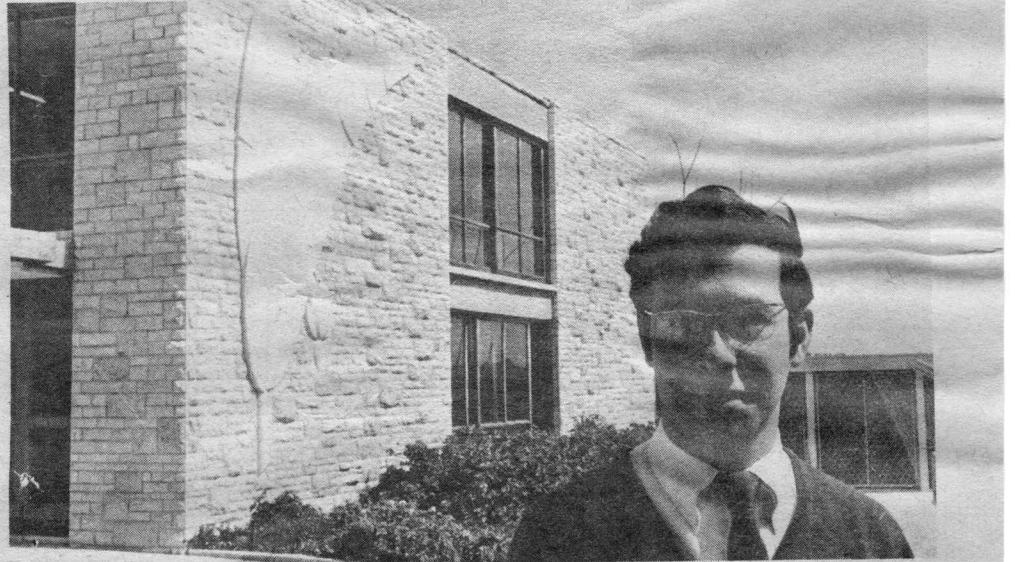
David D. Roskies, 20, of Montreal, is sufficiently talented and versatile to get away with such a remark which may have sounded flippant coming from somebody else.

Pursuing a full study program in Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, David copes with a whole array of hobbies ranging from editing a Yiddish literary journal to acting, writing and producing plays. He is one of the 63 Canadian students enrolled at the University this academic year (there were 50 last year and 37 the year before).

Born in Montreal, where his family lives at 17 Pagnuelo Street, David is the youngest of four brothers and sisters. He attended the Jewish People's School, graduated from Outremont High School in 1965, then took up Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University in the United States.

He came to Israel last August together with four or five other Canadian students, under the auspices of the American Student Program sponsored by the American and Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University. His main reason for coming to Israel was to study Judaica, "but of course I came for emotional reasons as well," he says. He has taken up Yiddish and Hebrew Literature, Talmud and Jewish Philosophy, and at the end of the academic year will return to Brandeis to graduate. He considers returning to Jerusalem to do graduate work, because - as he puts it - "the Hebrew University today is the world's centre for Jewish Studies, with the greatest concentration of leading scholars in this field, and if one wants to have a serious go at these studies, Jerusalem is the place".

Despite his tough study schedule, David manages to pursue his various hobbies. A few weeks after his arrival in Israel, while attending the University's summer **ulpan**, he took part in the ulpan students' hilarious performance of "Six Days of Peter", a play written by the students and a take-off on the June War. David played the role of the narrator and contributed



David D. Roskies, of Montreal, at "Canada Hall" on the Hebrew University campus in Jerusalem.

considerably to the success of the play.

His most successful theatre venture was last year at Brandeis when his play "Hineni" (Hebrew for "Here I am"), which he also produced, won him the Theron Bamberger Award for Playwriting. The play, describing life in the Ghetto of Vilna during World War II, was performed as theatre-in-the-round. David had devoted much time to the subject - "I read extensively on this part of the Holocaust" - and the play, which he describes as extremely dramatic, made a "tremendous impression" on the audience. Adding to the success was an unusual mixed media technique employed by the director, using film, slides and music.

Elaborating on his feelings about the Holocaust, David says that while Jews all

over the world commemorate the Fall of the Temple, only Israelis observe the Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He regrets that mass gatherings commemorating Holocaust events are attended mainly by "those who do not need them", i.e. survivors of the Holocaust, while the youth stays away. Young people do not understand speeches in Yiddish, he says, and it is a pity that such events are not more geared to youth, in a form which it understands.

Yiddish language and literature is another of David's main interests. Unlike most young Western Jews, he is well-versed in Yiddish, which to him is a second language. He realises that it will never again be a language widely used by Jews, but advocates the preservation of its literary treasures.

He has succeeding in transmitting his enthusiasm for Yiddish to a sizeable number of young people in Israel and abroad by means of a Yiddish literary journal named "Yugntruf" (Call to Youth), of which he is the editor. This International Jewish Youth Journal (as it is called in its English subtitle) is written by young people, all of whom were born outside the areas where Yiddish was once spoken. The magazine, which has a circulation of 2500, is usually published in the United States, but the tenth issue has just been published in Israel. 800 copies have been sent to the United States, and the rest to Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Australia and France.

## We've Moved!

Members and supporters of the Hebrew University will be interested to learn that the National Office of the Canadian Friends has moved to a new home. All correspondence should now be addressed to:-

**Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University,  
Lauterman House,  
1506 McGregor Ave.,  
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