

Lengyel, Alfonz

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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

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Ruckus at Ruins

A distinguished archaeologist was pulled off a Roman excavation after he refused to pay wages to the pretty, blond assistant of his Smithsonian Institution boss.

The archaeologist is Dr. Alfonz Lengyel of Wayne State University, who in 1968

headed the Smithsonian-backed "dig" to unearth the secrets of Sirmium, a Roman imperial capital in Yugoslavia.

His Smithsonian boss, Kennedy Schmertz, expanded the budget by \$600 so his own pretty assistant, Constance Rogers, could be Lengyel's "administrative consultant."

But Miss Rogers disappeared from the site from time to time. On one occasion, Lengyel asked her point-blank where she had been. She replied, according to his affidavit: "It's none of your business. I'm on a confidential mission."

When she demanded her full pay, Lengyel withheld about half of it.

Lengyel went on with his excavation, often working in the pits with his laborers. But Miss Rogers again disappeared — this time just as the junk-teering Schmertz arrived in Yugoslavia. Schmertz now admits he had notified Miss Rogers he was on the way but neglected to inform Lengyel.

When Miss Rogers turned up again at the diggings, Lengyel asked her where she had been.

"Mr. Schmertz arrived in Belgrade and I work for him," she is quoted in the affidavit as replying. Both had registered at Belgrade's posh Hotel Metropole. When Lengyel learned about this, he confronted her with the information.

"A thousand other people

were in the same hotel," she replied, according to Lengyel's sworn statement.

Why, persisted Lengyel, didn't his boss visit the important Sirmium site. Miss Rogers allegedly retorted disdainfully: "He's not interested in your excavation."

Schmertz not only failed to visit the Sirmium site but didn't even bother to telephone Lengyel for a report on the project. Yet Schmertz was supposed to be overseeing it for the Smithsonian.

He told us he had arranged with Miss Rogers to inspect other sites in Yugoslavia. This would explain her absences, he said. He concedes that she was supposed to be working for Lengyel and that he never informed Lengyel of the unusual arrangement.

While Miss Rogers acknowledges she had Schmertz were in Belgrade together, she emphasizes it was all perfectly proper. Their relationship is based, both say, on mutual respect.

Footnote: Lengyel was praised for his work by such famed archaeologists as Princeton's Homer Thompson and Prof. Andre Varagnac, Director of the International Institute of Archaic Civilization in Paris. Yet a Smithsonian panel, through Denison University which was receiving the grant, kicked Lengyel off the project. The Yugoslav archaeologists protested to no avail.