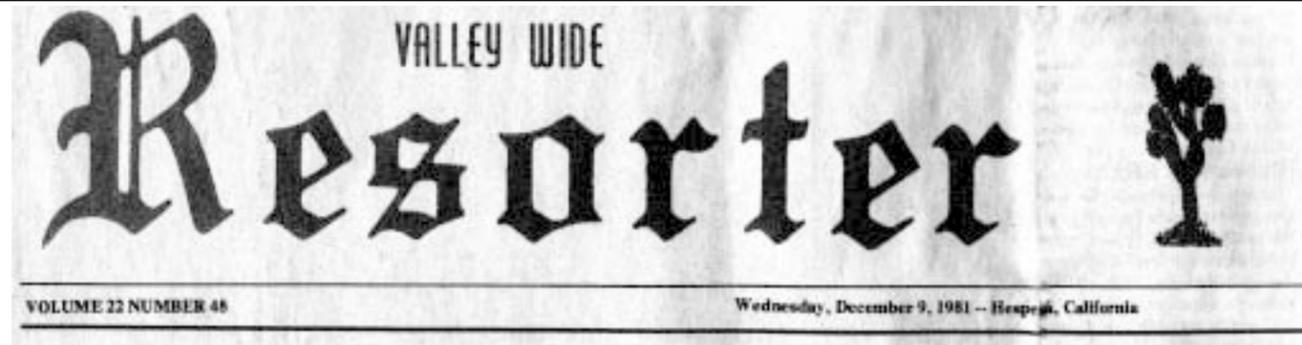


Note: Although there are some inaccuracies in this account, overall it is a good biographical article that should be of interest to students of A.K. Mozumdar. – The Universal Message



He loved mountains

The Prince...

He died in a rest home in San Diego on March 9, 1953, and was cremated. His ashes were taken to the Forest Lawn cemetery in Glendale and on March 16 at 3 p.m. he was laid to rest. A memorial card from the funeral says that a certain Ernest Holmes, from Lewis Mortuary in San Diego, officiated.

So ended the life of Prince Akhoy Kumar Mozumdar, healer, lecturer and writer by profession, ladies' man, drinker and con man by legend. A Hindu who converted to Christianity, Mozumdar preached the power of positive thinking and wrote of his long conversations with Christ.

Few remember what he said and did, but many have seen something he left behind, a white temple perched on the hillside among the pine trees in Crestline, overlooking what is now Lake Silverwood. The temple, part of what is still known as Camp Mozumdar, is a landmark: travelers see it as they drive below, kids go there to drink beer, unknown persons vandalize it.

It is history.

Sikh turned Christian

Accounts vary concerning Prince Mozumdar's earlier years. An article that appeared in the Crestline Courier newspaper Aug. 29, 1941, gave an account more specific than most about Mozumdar's beginnings.

He was born in 1863, in Bengal, to parents of the Sikh tribe. The Sikhs were war-

riors by tradition, but his father was a lawyer, and the family was one of nobility.

He became interested in theology at an early age, and his mother, noting his spiritual side, named him Akhoy Kumar, or "A Son of God." He became intrigued in the art of healing, and at the age of 16 left home to become an ascetic.

Christianity gained his interest, and he made a trip to the Holy Land to learn more about the Christian Savior. He was studying with a guru at this time, and it was his guru who eventually advised him to go to America. He departed, traveling first to China and Japan, where he studied for a year or more.

He came by steamer to Seattle in 1903, landing on American soil with an allowance from home of \$9 a month. With the help of a social worker who encouraged him to use his talent for healing, he settled in Spokane, in the home of a family of Swedish Christians.

He stayed with this family for several years, getting along with them well and learning English. And he studied the teachings of Christ.

He joins the Army

The publisher at one time of the Rim of the World News, Ken Howell, wrote an article about Prince Mozumdar as part of a series of pieces on the history of the San Bernardino Mountains. According to Howell, when World War I came along Prince Mozumdar joined the U.S. Army as an of-

ficer. He was stationed in the San Francisco area.

By that time, Mozumdar had already applied for American citizenship. He was granted it and, thereby, one story goes, he became the first East Indian ever to become a naturalized citizen of the United States.

After the war, he returned to his religious endeavors, writing and offering lecture tours. He traveled around the country, teaching his own interpretation of Christ's message and healing people in his audiences. He was being introduced now as Prince Mozumdar. He was becoming popular, very popular.

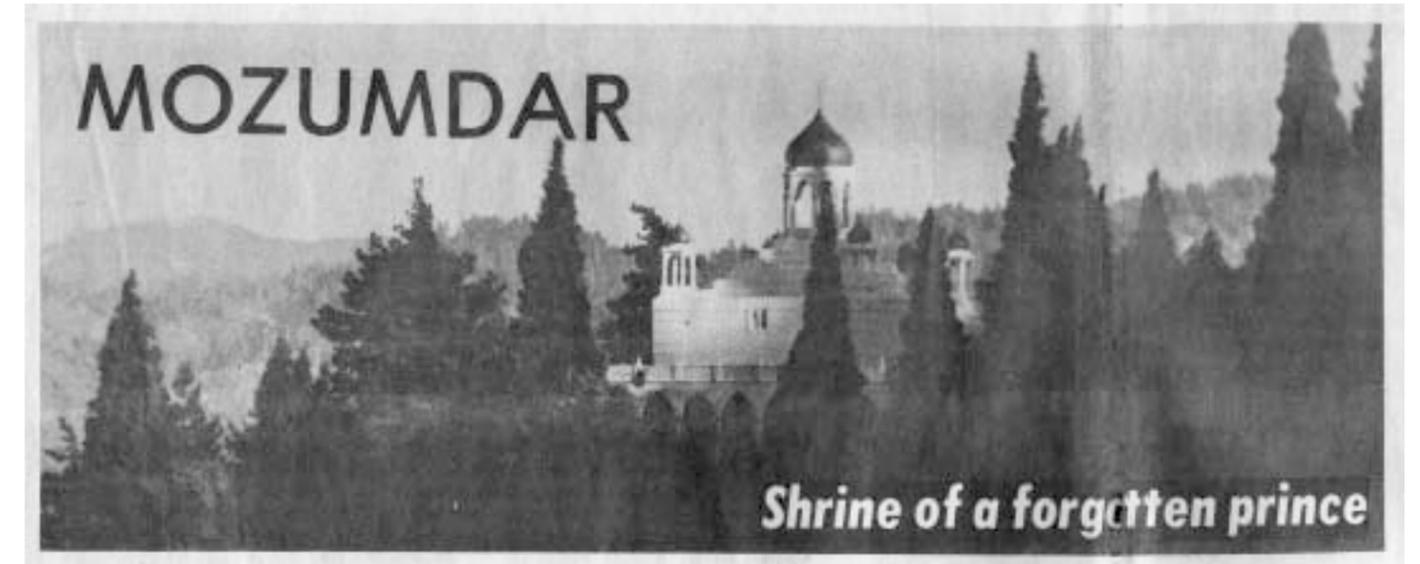
He spoke at Emerson College in Boston, and a woman who was a student then, Cora Fitch Smith, remembers him in a letter written much later.

"He was a short, slender man of 35 or 40 years of age. He spoke with very good English and he made such an impression on me that I have always recalled his visit as one of the highlights of my years at Emerson College of Oratory in Boston.

"He wore his native dress and a white turban. His eyes were very keen, his complexion dark. He had an intense manner of speech and one felt the intenseness of his belief in the brotherhood of man."

Aura of gold sparks

An interesting account of a Mozumdar lecture in 1925 is left by a sports journalist, Frederick G. Lieb, who wrote a book on the



occult at the time. In the 1920s and 1930s, as now, there were many exotic religious factions and cults, each with their own charismatic leader. But Mozumdar got higher marks than most.

"In appearance, Mozumdar is one of the most remarkable human beings I have ever gazed upon," wrote Lieb. "He seems to have found the fountain of perpetual youth, only this Eastern philosopher and scholar finds it bubbling within himself. Though some of his followers tell me he is well along in the seventies, he has the appearance of a vigorous, healthy-looking man in his early thirties.

"Around Mozumdar's entire body, not once but several times, my wife could see a three- to four-inch aura of white light, with golden sparks shooting from it. She has attended many other lectures given by European, American, and Hindu teachers, but only with Mozumdar did she see such emanations of light."

Prince comes to L.A.

About 1920 he came to Southern California, and did work at the University of Redlands. He liked the area, and with his savings bought two acres at the top of the San Bernardino Mountains, near the village of Crestline. His new land faced north for a vast clear view of the Mojave Desert, and he started camping here during the summers. He liked it very much – it reminded him of the place of his birth.

He kept on lecturing and writing pamphlets, a charismatic guru teaching self-im-

provement through positive thinking, and telling of his communications with Christ.

This is how Prince Akhoy Kumar Mozumdar came to the San Bernardino Mountains and how there came to be a white temple in the pines overlooking what is now Lake Silverwood. But that was much later. At first he only camped there, making his permanent home at a plush residence on Hillside Avenue in Hollywood.

Along with his new following had come money, to buy the Hollywood home and expand Camp Mozumdar. Much of it came from wealthy Hollywood patrons and patronesses. They liked his mystic, personal approach to Christ and his teachings that evil and disease are only a result of negative thinking, that all it took to make something happen was to believe in it. What Mozumdar taught was like an Orientalized version of Dale Carnegie.

The wealthy find him

In any case, Hollywood liked him and one couple in particular, Mr. and Mrs. M.E. Splane, supported and followed him, and they contributed money. With it Mozumdar acquired another 90 acres in Crestline and built a log lodge, completed in 1930.

The Splanes were transplanted Britons, who had tragically lost two daughters and a son. When they met Mozumdar they were both in poor health, but the prince apparently aided them with his healing powers.

After Mr. Splane died, his widow became an increasingly devoted follower of Mozumdar. Along with William P. Lodge, a

San Diego architect, Mignon Splane founded a corporation to support and promote the teachings of her guru. The corporation was called The New Messianic World Message. It distributed Mozumdar's books and pamphlets, sponsored his lectures and invited the public to the lodge in Crestline to hear the prince teach in the peaceful surroundings of the mountaintop.

From the literature they put out at that time, one thing stands out and seem to separate the Mozumdar talks from similar sessions today – they were free. Not only that, but those who came to the mountain had the free use of the pool and barbecue.



MOZUMDAR

Familiar mountain shrine has an elusive past



THE TEMPLE of Mozumdar is a known landmark but a mystery to many. Begun in 1938 but never finished, it was designed by prominent San Diego architect William P. Lodge, who became a devout follower of Mozumdar's and whose daughter served as the prince's secretary. The temple is based on a masonry foundation of local stone and is made entirely of poured concrete. It was made to be bomb-proof.

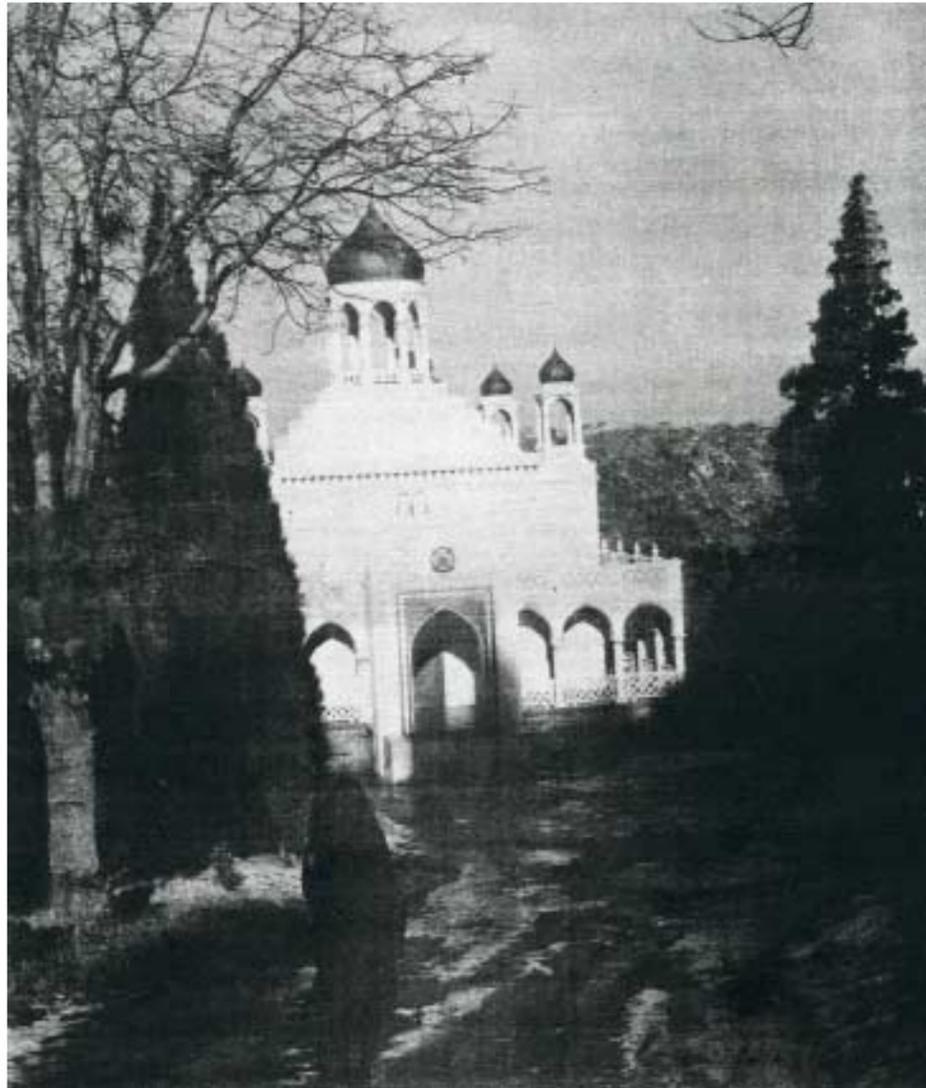


THE SIKH from Bengal who came as a young man to the West to learn about Christ, Akhoy Kumar Mozumdar settled in the Los Angeles area in the 1920s and fell in love with the San Bernardino Mountains. A mystic and a healer who used the title of prince, he wrote books and lectured all over the United States.

Photos by Joe Bridgman



DURING THE '30s Prince Mozumdar gained a monied following headquartered in Hollywood and he bought acreage near Crestline. It is said that the grand view of the Mojave Desert he found there inspired his search for Christ. At the urging of his backers he built the temple that is still a landmark today, but a depletion of funds, World War II and the prince's ill health prevented the project from ever reaching completion.



The Temple...

An amphitheater was built at Camp Mozumdar, in the mid-thirties, with a floor of concrete circled by stone pillars. It was to seat those who came for the lecturers, and the pillars, twelve of them, represented the Apostles of Christ. Mignon Splane paid for the structure and dedicated it to her lost son; the brass plaque is still there.

And though the pines around it have grown much taller, the amphitheater still has an airy view of the Mojave Desert.

Then they built the temple. The co-founder of Messianic Corporation, William P. Lodge, was an architect. Whether the idea of building a temple was his, no one can say, but it became his idea, and he grew intrigued by it.

Martha Hall, now of Lake Elsinore, got to know Prince Mozumdar, Mrs. Splane, and Mr. And Mrs. Lodge in 1950 when the YMCA, which she helped run, obtained the camp. She and her husband were intimate with the proceedings by which Mozumdar gave the camp to the YMCA – and embittered some of his backers.

“When I met Prince Mozumdar, I could see why he would have an influence on people – you never found him making other people unhappy. He inspired loyalty.

“I always loved that man. He was an awfully fine person, a kind, patient and gentle man.”

Mrs. Hall’s acquaintanceship with William

Lodge continued after Mozumdar’s death. She remembers that “The temple was Mr. Lodge’s pet project. Of course, he was an architect, and he was all for it.”

Architect’s brainchild

Mrs. Hall says that her impression was that Prince Mozumdar had always been lukewarm about the temple plan, that it was Lodge’s brainchild.

“He couldn’t have been that enthusiastic about it, he was totally non-materialistic. Mozumdar never owned a thing, he didn’t believe in owning anything. Everything he had was borrowed. That’s why the Lodges had to take care of him.”

But Mozumdar had predicted a nuclear war and one part of the plan for the temple was that it should be bomb-proof. Mozumdar wanted the temple to be a bomb shelter.

“Lodge was attracted to the opportunity of building the temple because it was to be bomb-proof,” recalls Mrs. Hall. “The corporation went ahead with the temple, when Mozumdar was against it. Later on, he felt that the temple might have caused the downfall of the whole thing.”

Mr. Lodge said in the Crestline Courier article, when asked where he had gotten the inspiration for the temple, “Prince Mozumdar came to me early one morning and told me what he wanted. We stepped off the ground, and I sketched out the picture that came to me as if in a dream. Now here it is.”

The temple is made from the ground floor up of poured concrete. The foundation and basement walls are masonry of local stone. A common legend is that it was built as a replica of the Taj Majal, but this was not the case, according to its architect.

Another common legend is that the temple is very big, which it is not, though it may appear so from a distance.

Another legend is that the solid brass doors that once formed the temple’s front entrance were shipped all the way from India.

‘Mozumdar is coming!’

Interviewing for his articles in the Rim of the World News, Ken Howell spoke to Don Foster, who used to operate a taxi service in Crestline. Foster recalled the construction of the temple. There was a truck involved.

“He was often chauffeured around in a limousine as he supervised the work on the temple. But when the prince got behind the wheel of the truck he was another person, al-

most like a madman as he drove around the mountain turns at high speed.

“When you heard brakes squealing and wheels screeching you knew you had better get out of the way – Mozumdar was coming.”

The Mozumdar temple was begun in 1938. It was never finished.

The Crest Forester article from 1941 notes that the temple was not yet completed and then says, in its second-to-last paragraph, “Another project which will be put into execution as soon as funds are available is a Castle of Science where underprivileged children may receive medical care.”

By the time of the 1948 article in the Crestline Courier, the temple still had not been finished, but this author, too, remained optimistic. The last paragraph of that article reads, “Unfortunately, the World War and the inflation have halted the completion of the beautiful temple. I have written this, hoping that sensible men, educated, scientific men, will through their weight back of Mozumdar to complete the great architectural Trinity on top of the San Bernardino Mountains.

“It should be converted into a great World University where the best of science and philosophy is taught, fearless to the youth of all nations. There is a promise of more funds as soon as the present inflation subsides.”

But by this time Prince Mozumdar’s health was weakening.

Leader’s health fails

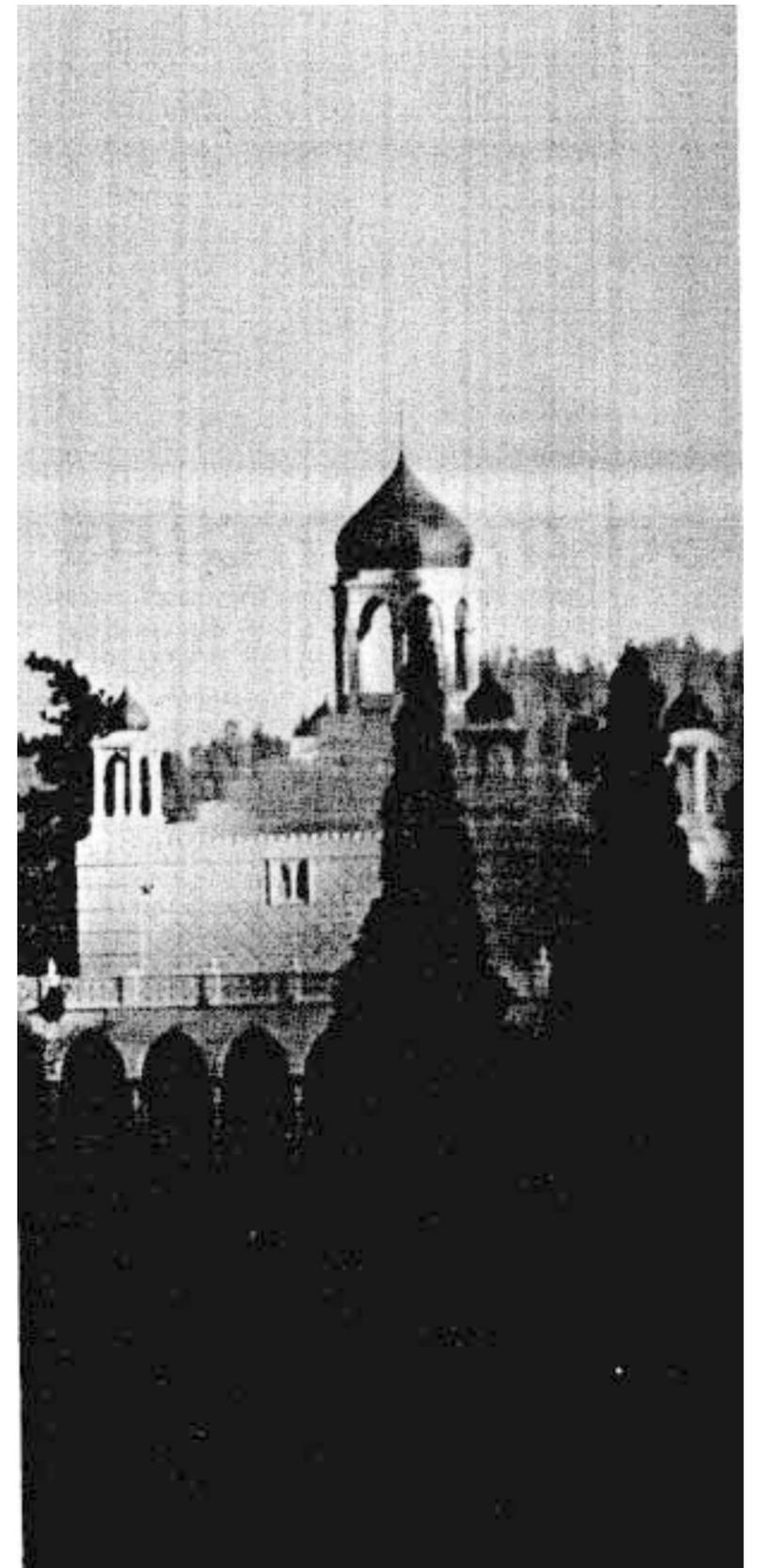
“He had developed severe high blood pressure, and when he made the trip up the mountain it just went sky-high,” recalls Mrs. Hall. “He only visited the camp twice in 1951, or at least the kids at the camp only got to see him twice. He was very frail.

“But the corporation kept his ill health kind of quiet, because he was a healer. Even Mr. Lodge wouldn’t say much about it.”

But apparently neither high living nor drink contributed to Prince Mozumdar’s bad health. “Athere was never any alcohol up at the camp,” insists Mrs. Hall. She says that both Mr. Lodge and Mrs. Splane were teetotalers.

A doctor who came to the mountains in 1946, Russell Atkinson, still practices in Crestline today. He had occasion to treat Prince Mozumdar several times, for minor things, between 1946 and 1950.

Once he and his wife went to the Lodge at the camp to dine with Mozumdar and some of his entourage. Dr. Atkinson said that Mozumdar was a very likable, normal kind



Special thanks are extended to Tom Robinson

of man, though quiet. The food and service at the table that night were excellent, recalls Dr. Atkinson, and good wine was included.

But Dr. Atkinson insists that from his knowledge of Mozumdar medically there was no evidence that the Prince drank too much. "He was not a drunk. He did not drink too much at all, not at all," says Atkinson.

Temple never finished

Other forces had taken their toll on A.K. Mozumdar and the Messianic Corporation. A standard reason given for the incompleteness of the temple is that World War II made building materials impossible to get. But more than once source remembers that financial problems were also arising.

And sometime in the mid-forties, no one seems to know just when, Mignon Splane passed away. Her faith and money had been the driving force behind the camp and the New Messianic World Message. It can only be assumed that her demise had a poor effect on Mozumdar's health.

In 1950 Akhoy Kumar Mozumdar sold his beloved mountaintop to the YMCA for a nominal sum. It would become a camp for kids, whom he loved.

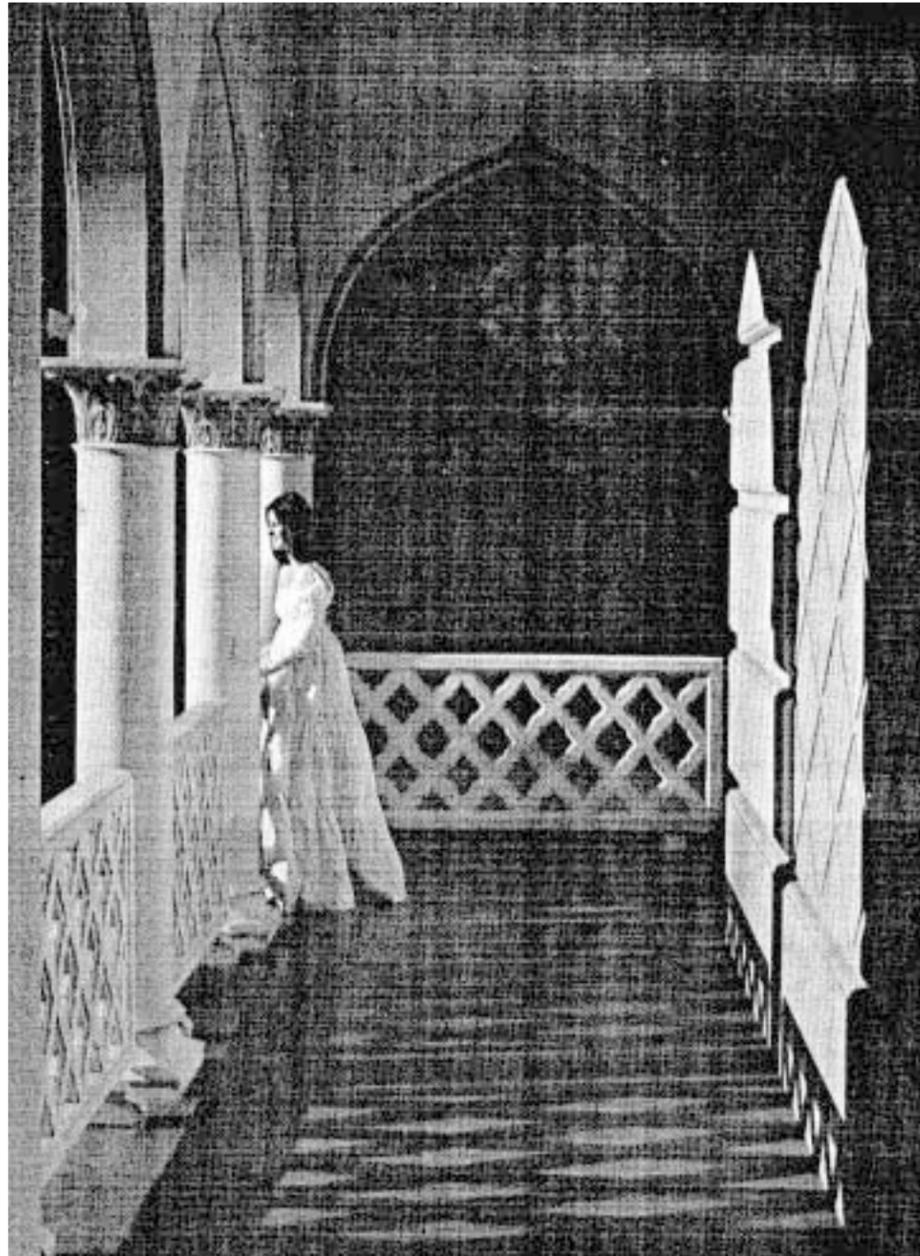
"A lot of people in the Messianic Corporation were very resentful that he practically gave it to us," recalls Martha Hall. "But his dream had always been to turn it into a childrens' rehabilitation center. That's what he wanted."

The YMCA operated it as a childrens' camp until 1977. Indeed, part of the camp was used as a facility for deaf children. Everyone who worked for the "Y" during those years loved the camp and the setting, with particularly fond words for the old lodge, the first structure Mozumdar built there.

But the camp had lingering problems with fire danger, and it never seemed able to support itself. So, in 1977, the YMCA sold Camp Mozumdar. It was purchased by a religious group called the Unification Church, Christians who follow an Asian holy man called Sun Myung Moon.

So again Camp Mozumdar is the retreat of a Christian group that follows a charismatic leader, a group that, like Prince Mozumdar's, might be thought odd by some.

Camp Mozumdar is not open to the public at this time. The old lodge burnt down a couple of years ago, and the temple has yet to be finished.



Temple in the mountains speaks eloquently of another time

The article above is reprinted from the Valley Wide Resorter, Hesperia, California, Dec. 9, 1981. The response at the right is from the same newspaper, Dec. 23, 1981. Both articles courtesy of Francesca Martell.

Wed., Dec. 23, 1981

VALLEY WIDE Resorter



Wednesday, December 23, 1981 -- Hesperia, California

20 cents

A New Mozumdar Chapter

HESPERIA – In an in-depth feature article, Dec. 9, the Resorter told about A.K. Mozumdar, referring to him as a "forgotten prince" and visited his unfinished, white temple in the mountains overlooking Silverwood Lake.

It turned out that Prince Mozumdar was not forgotten and still, 28 years after his death, has devout followers who live by his writings.

It was an uncanny coincidence that two days before the Mozumdar article came out, New York City resident Francesca Martell, on her first visit ever to Hesperia, checked into the Hesperia Country Club Inn for a stay of several weeks with her husband, a chiropractor.

Shortly after the paper came out, Mrs. Martell called the Resorter.

"I picked up this paper and couldn't believe it," she said. Then she revealed that for many years she has studied two of Prince Mozumdar's books as guides to her own life. She said further that she had learned of a group of present-day Mozumdar followers who are located somewhere in Oregon.

"Obviously your writer, Joe Bridgman, did not realize the significance of Ernest Holmes conducting Mozumdar's funeral in 1953," said Mrs. Martell.

"Ernest Holmes was founder of Religious Science. He wrote *Science of Mind*, which is the bible of the Religious Science movement," she said.

Mrs. Martell said it was the early 1960s when she took some classes in New York which had Holmes' assistant Raymond Charles Barker as lecturer that she first became aware of Mozumdar. Barker started the first Religious Science Church in Manhattan, she said. He is now retired in Palm Springs.

She said she went to Barker and asked him if there was any one book that he might rec-

ommend to her above all others. The book he recommended was *Today and Tomorrow* by Mozumdar.

"I was fascinated by it... I still am. I carry it with me at all times," she said.

A couple of years later, Mrs. Martell said a friend gave her another book. She was struck

by the similarity in it. It was not until after reading it that she looked for the author's name and found it to be Mozumdar. That book was *The Triumphant Spirit*.

Mrs. Martell and her friend wrote to whatever address they could obtain to try to find out more about Mozumdar. One letter resulted in a response from a man in Oregon who told briefly about a group of Mozumdar followers in that state.

Mrs. Martell said over the years, by reading and re-reading Mozumdar's books, and the positiveness they project, Mozumdar has become "a very special person in my life."

She said she believes he studied Religious Science and incorporated some of its Christ-consciousness in his own writings.

"In my opinion, I think he was a forerunner of visual imagery in the science of psychotherapy. It involves having sort of a dialogue with Christ. I have used it and it works," she said.

Mozumdar's *Today and Tomorrow* has been Mrs. Martell's spiritual reference book ever since she discovered it.

"There are places throughout it now that I have underlined in red, black and yellow. You grow with the book. I think anyone could take those writings and put them to use no matter what denomination they are. I think if a Catholic read them, he would just become a better Catholic," she said.

In their brief stay here, Mrs. Martell said she and her husband have become so impressed with the area and the friendly people that they would like to return and retire here.



FRANCESCA MARTELL