



Flamenco Romántico Holiday Letter 2012

–Another interesting year during which I spent time recovering from shingles and building up my energy level. I also started to clean up and organize my office (and my life). Freddie spent time in his guitar workshop repairing instruments and going to his exercise class.

Last year, in what is now becoming a tradition, between Christmas and New Years, Freddie's sister and her family came to visit us, along with Freddie's brother and his mother. In addition, my son Elun, his wife Donna and granddaughter Josie joined us. Josie got her ears pierced. We all had a fantastic time!

In December of last year our good friends Cihltli and Ethan taught an inspiring Flamenco workshop here.

In January, another good friend, Lakshmi, came to visit and taught a Flamenco workshop here before returning to Spain. I missed seeing her this summer in Sevilla because, as most of you know, we did not make our yearly trip to Spain in 2012.

This year of being at home, I have been building up my psychotherapy practice and my Flamenco dance classes. Our vacation rental business has taken off and we have added camping to the two rooms we rent out. We were quite busy in the summer and spent a lot of time washing and changing sheets!

In June, we celebrated Freddie's 73rd birthday and our 12th wedding anniversary with a wonderful party shared with our friend Adam, whose birthday was just before Freddie's. This was the first birthday Freddie has had here in years, as we are usually in Spain during this time!

Because we weren't in Spain this summer, we were able to attend a family gathering at my sister Elaine's to see our cousin Jim Forest, who lives in Holland. He usually visits every summer, so we almost always miss his visit because of our travels.

In the fall of last year, I started to attend Freddie's martial art exercise class with him on the nights that I wasn't teaching dance or leading my shamanic drumming circles. It was fun to do it together and also to see Freddie's physical coordination improving and his speech

improving with it. We stopped going in June, when our teacher, John, got married and took a break. Then our lives got busy and we haven't yet returned.

During the summer, I spent a week in Canton (upstate New York, near the Canadian border) visiting granddaughter Josie and, of course, my son Elun and daughter-in-law Donna. Josie is 6 now and a bundle of energy and fun. She wore me out. We walked and wrestled, danced and sang. We played with her new middle-aged dog Ezra. We cooked and read a little. We went to Josie's tee ball practice and we played ball at home. Josie has become an expert hula-hooper, which she combines with singing, hand clapping and making faces! In addition to her athletic and artistic prowess, Josie has a wonderful sense of humor and is a very caring and sweet human being.

Elun and Donna, now both tenured professors at St. Lawrence University, will be living in France from January to July. Donna will teach two courses and Elun will be on sabbatical. When they leave France, Donna will be delivering the plenary address at a conference in England. Josie is a little nervous about learning French, but we believe that she will do fine.

This year Freddie had to take the written test to renew his driver's license. He studied hard by taking practice tests on the Internet and his reading ability improved. He passed the test and now has a valid drivers' license, although he still does not drive on the freeway.

Instead of Spain this year, we enjoyed spring and summer at our Paraíso and Spain came to us!

In May, Manuel Agujetas, an old (Freddie's age) and legendary Gypsy singer came to the Bay Area and gave performances in Santa Cruz and in Berkeley. He was inspiring.

In August, my Flamenco dance teacher Concha Vargas came with her husband Rafael. They had stayed with us for 2 months with their 3 children 10 years ago. Although Concha has been here both before and after that, Rafael had come only once and he had always wanted to return. He finally made it! When Concha went to teach in Southern California, Rafael stayed with us, cooking, singing and enjoying hanging out with Freddie. Freddie and Rafael did a lot of singing together and they were always laughing. We had such a wonderful

time with both Concha and Rafael that we decided to visit them in Lebrija (Spain, near Sevilla) in March of 2013.

Concha taught an inspiring workshop here for 5 days. Later she danced in two shows, one in Berkeley and one in Santa Cruz. She was magnificent, better than ever, both in her teaching and her performing. Another good friend and talented, legendary Flamenco artist, Juan del Gastor and his wife Lucy arrived in the US just before the shows. Juan and Concha performed with Kina Mendez, a Gypsy singer from Jerez who fell in love here and married an American and stayed in California. The three Gypsy artists ignited each other and the shows were dynamic and inspiring.

Several weeks later, at the beginning of September, Juan and Lucy and a friend of theirs whom we had met in Spain but who lives in New York, Jackie, came and stayed here. Juan gave an intensive workshop over the Labor Day weekend that included dance, palmas, singing, guitar, and cooking! It was another extreme success –everyone loved it! And we loved visiting with Juan, Lucy and Jackie.

The day after Concha's workshop I had cataract surgery on my left eye. Freddie drove me to the operation and Concha and Rafael went with us. I felt very loved and supported. The day after the second show I had my right eye operated on. Now I can see clearly and my vision is still improving. An unexpected result is that I can see up close and all my reading glasses are now way too strong. I was seeing double at the computer until I took off my glasses and could actually see the type. I am amazed!

Mid September, our friend Stephanie (Estefanía) (who stayed with us last year, as well as other years, before she went to Spain), visited us again. This time she came with her new husband Luis, a Gypsy palmero from Jerez whom she met last year, and their 5 month-old baby Miguelito. I fell in love with Miguelito.

In October, I turned 68. We celebrated with a few friends and had a stellar time.

November – Thanksgiving –more friends and food and party.

December– Our friend Armando died. We are sad.

Acknowledging mortality, we have decided to spend the Holidays with Family, instead of taking a planned trip to Mexico. And we will postpone our trip to Spain as well. We have set in motion some travel and home care help for Freddie's mother Bea, who is very grateful and appreciative.

During the holiday season, we are looking forward to this year's visit here with Bea, Freddie's sister Dorothy, her husband John, daughter Lisa and her three almost-grown children, and Freddie's brother Timmie and wife Joanie, between Christmas and New Years. This has become a wonderful tradition.

Freddie and I have been enjoying sunsets and food from the garden. We have been delighting in our blooming flowers and our beautiful place on the hilltop.



Our population here has changed. Our long-term renters moved out of the cottage after 10 years, and another wonderful couple, Nick and Michelle, moved in. They are both acupuncture students and go to school with Leia, who is still living in the Lavender room. Nick and Michelle also do martial arts in the same studio where Freddie and I take classes and they had already met Freddie there. But they arrived here through Leia's recommendation. Now they and Leia are taking my Flamenco dance classes and doing extraordinary well. So at last we have a full Flamenco community living here again. We love it!

Leia is the daughter of a close friend (Marcellus) who Freddie has known for over 50 years! Leia and her beautiful big white dog Mucuchies, moved here in late summer last year. As a little girl growing up at the Renaissance faire, Leia used to sit, enraptured, at Freddie's feet when he played Flamenco guitar. And now she is learning to dance Flamenco. She has been taking three Flamenco classes a week and is making phenomenal progress.

James is still living in the trailer, doing amazing computer artwork, and playing guitar for my classes. Joining him, Freddie often plays cajon (drum) for my classes, which I love. One of James' guitar students, Kiel, also accompanies some of the classes and is a great addition. On Thursday nights our friend Madeline comes and sings for the Bulerías class. We dance at the end of each Bulerías class, so class feels like a fiesta and we all have a lot of fun! Madeline and I also practice our singing together and Freddie often helps us. Flamenco is always in our lives, especially now that we constantly listen to a great Internet Flamenco radio station from Sevilla. We are grateful again.

Because we didn't leave for Spain for three months this year, my classes are growing and all my wonderful students are making great progress. Many are taking two or three classes/week. I am excited about my teaching and have been inventing new methods and exercises. My students impressed Concha and Juan and Lucy.

Of course I am still seeing psychotherapy clients, although my practice is small, and I am still leading shamanic drumming circles and doing that work. I have also started to put together a book, "Musings on the Path of Life". My goal is to publish it.

Freddie has been steadily working in his guitar shop, both repairing and making guitars. His speech continues to improve, even almost seven years after his stroke. We are amazed, grateful and happy.

Freddie's mother Bea turned 93 in February and my father Jack turned 93 in September. Both are in good health. My father and his wife Peggy took a trip to France this year and my father says it will be their last trip out of the country.

Freddie's son Manolo and his wife Alta are still in Las Vegas and we miss seeing them. But interacting with the family on Facebook keeps us more connected. Our grandchildren and great grandchildren on

Manolo's side use Facebook and we love seeing their photos and their comments.

Freddie's daughter Maggie and her husband Jason and our two granddaughters from that side are still in Florida. Our grandson Kyle joined the Marines and looks so grown up and handsome in his uniform. They are on Facebook too so we are able to stay in touch.

My cousin Rosanne's struggle with Alzheimer's deepens but she is taken care of beautifully and lovingly by her husband Charles along with help from her four grown children.

My sister Elaine and her husband Ken keep traveling and doing well, as are their families.

Freddie's sister Dorothy and her husband John are still in Seattle. Freddie's brother Timmie and his wife Joanie live in Point Arena (northern California) so we get to see them a little more often. Unfortunately we never see Freddie's brother Terry, who lives out of state, but we occasionally see two of his daughters.

Our assistant Rama continues to help us keep things together here and I am very grateful for her help and her friendship and the great books she loans me.

Martin, our angel gardener handyman, is also still with us and we are filled with gratitude for him too. He keeps this place functioning and in good shape. He also speaks Spanish with me so I won't forget it.

Freddie and I feel so blessed. We have wonderful family and friends, good health and recovery, and we live in an extraordinary beautiful place. We have a garden full of food and we have music and dance.

We wish you all a beautiful year and thank you for being in our lives.

Freddie and Marianna

