

Flamenco Romántico Holiday Letter 2013



Is it really November already? I am just starting to write this. The year has flown by. My dear cousin Rosanne's birthday is this month and she died of Alzheimer's in July. She is now out of pain and depression, but we all miss her. The Rose we planted in her memory is blooming. I am sad writing.

Death has been no stranger this year. We have attended five memorials for old friends who have been in our lives for years. The first was for Armando Fojaco, who died in December of last year. Then our friend Earl Nisbet, a Frank Lloyd Wright apprentice who was Freddie's guitar student in the 50's and was still a current friend, died suddenly of cancer. This year also our friend Ernesto Hernandez, part of the old Flamenco vanguard, died. I have known him since the 70's and Freddie has known him since the 50's.

And yet another dear friend, Rita Byxbe, died suddenly of cancer, two weeks after it was diagnosed. Again, I have known her since the 70's and Freddie has known her since the 50's.

This year we have had to deepen our compassion and learn how to detach from an outcome. We learn how precious life is and how suddenly it can end. Losing friends and family has been a teaching. Being with my cousin Rosanne so much during her last days, I watched her gently go into death. In a shamanic journey I did for her, I heard her say, "Get me out of here". After she died she came to me in another shamanic journey and told me that she was free and that she no longer had Alzheimer's. We are grateful for the way Rosanne's husband and dear friend, Charles Berrard, took care of her, with compassion and understanding and love.



When we went to visit Rita to say goodbye, I couldn't believe how much fun we had and how much we all laughed. It was not what I had expected and it will always stay in my mind as another way to react to death.

The year has been marked both by a lot of death and paradoxically, a lot of laughter!



Freddie spent emotional, intensive time with his sister Dorothy and his brother Timmie and Timmie's wife Joanie. They packed up and cleaned their mother Bea's apartment when she was moved to a convalescent home by the hospital, the first time she fractured her hip just a little. The fracture when she fell in October was more serious and definitely needed operating on. At first Bea resisted, but after a night back in the convalescent home, in great and unnecessary pain, she reversed her decision and went back into the hospital to have the operation

after all. It was her first operation in 94 years! We all had spent many hours trying to convince her to have the surgery. And we all had to learn to let go of the outcome when she at first refused surgery. We have also had to have compassion, seeing her moved unwillingly from her apartment to a convalescent home.

Throughout this year I have taken many photos of plants, nature and friends with my iPhone. This has helped to heal me in these stressful times.



Between Christmas and New Years

Freddie's family visited again, as they have for years.

January – Freddie had several hospital stays and a hernia operation. We spent the rest of the month recovering from the Holidays, except when we went to Armando's memorial.

February – Earl died. Our dear friend Lakshmi and her friend David came from Spain and gave a Flamenco workshop in our studio as well as performing both in Santa Cruz and Berkeley.

Bea turned 94.

March – My students debuted at a 3-minute Flamenco performance at the Mello Theater in Watsonville with our musicians and me.

April – Earl’s memorial. Ernesto died. Our good friends Javier and Rina, also from Spain, stayed with us. It was Rina’s first time to visit our house in America; we had only known each other in Spain. Rina and I had lived together in Spain the last time we were there, before she and Javi became a couple. Javi on the other hand, had been to our house many times before. During their visit here we all had a lot of fun and Javi taught a Flamenco workshop and performed in Santa Cruz and Berkeley.



May – I went to Rouen, France to visit granddaughter Josie, son Elun, and daughter-in-law Donna. Donna had an assistant director position in the exchange program through their university. Elun was on sabbatical. Josie attended a French school and learned French. She turned 7 in June, shortly before they went home. I had a fantastic time. Elun was an

excellent tour guide and kept me too active to feel much jetlag! Josie and I had lots of fun together and we got to spend a lot of time with each other, especially when Elun and Donna went away for a few days. It was win-win.

When I returned, the garden was blooming and giving food and sustenance; it was both nutritional and spiritual.

June – Ernesto’s memorial. Our good friends Stephanie, Luis de la Tota, and their totally cute baby Miguelito stayed with us. They left from our party straight to the airport to return to Spain.

Freddie turned 74 and we celebrated with a big party for Freddie’s birthday and our 13th wedding anniversary. We brought Freddie’s son Mano and his wife Alta down from Las Vegas and it was wonderful seeing them. It was a great birthday/anniversary gift.

Our BnB vacation rental business continues to take off and is doing even better than last year. The Camping spots we created have been very popular. We were surprised.

July – Freddie cut off his right middle finger to the bottom of the nail with his planer. The surgeon who sewed it up was excellent and very nice. He didn’t expect the nail to grow back as nicely as it has. Now all

three of the middle fingers on Freddie's right hand are the same size. Fortunately, that is the hand that cannot feel much because of the stroke.

Luis de la Tota and Stephanie and Miguelito returned from Spain, landing at our home to pick up their car, which they had left here while in Europe. Luis gave a wonderful Flamenco workshop in our studio. And, as always, we laughed a lot and had a lot of fun!

My cousin Rosanne died. Her brother Jim came out from Holland and was by her side when she died, along with Charles and some of her children. I came over just after she died. We anointed her with oil and we covered her with rose petals.

August – Rosanne's memorial – Both Jim and his wife Nancy came from Holland. We saw a lot of wonderful people, although what brought us together was loss and grief.

Freddie's mother Bea was moved to a convalescent home and never got to return from the hospital to her apartment. Her life changed!

Our good friend and my long time Flamenco teacher, Concha Vargas, returned to the US in August. She spent a few days at our house and then went to San Diego to give a Flamenco workshop there, which coincided with an annual big Flamenco party there. We flew to San Diego for the festivities. At the party we saw many old friends.



Being in San Diego also gave us the opportunity to see Freddie's daughter Maggie and our granddaughters, Katie and Kerra. They had just moved back to San Diego from Florida and didn't even have a house yet. Maggie's husband Jason was unexpectedly deployed so he couldn't be there. Kyle, our grandson, is also in the military and is overseas too. It was good to see Maggie and the girls. It had been too long.

We also got to visit cousin Tamara and her husband Sam, and to eat dinner at their new condo that overlooks the ocean.

We spent several nights of that trip in the house of Lakshmi's gracious parents, but they were in Spain during that time so we missed seeing them. We are grateful for their hospitality.

September – Rita died. We had many beloved friends stay in our home. Concha returned to teach workshops here in our studio and in the Bay Area, as well as performing in both places. Her shows were the first in a series of three weeks of shows of the Flamenco Festival that our friend Nina put on. Concha returned to Spain right after her second show, after the first weekend.

While Concha was at our home, Rina and Javi returned because Javi was in the first two weeks of the shows and we all wanted to spend some time together. After the first performance, Stephanie, Luis de la Tota, and baby Miguel moved to our loft for the next two weeks. Luis was in all the shows. When he was in Santa Cruz to perform in the Flamenco shows, Jose Galvez slept on a comfortable purple velvet couch in our living room again. The dynamic of all those special people from Spain staying at our home was wonderful. We all laughed a lot and had a great time. They truly enjoyed performing with each other and getting to know and totally appreciate each other. In that sense, Freddie and I were literally a hub, connecting our friends from various parts of the Flamenco world. Frank and John from Fresno also visited us several times during this period.

Unfortunately, I sprained my ankle just before Concha's last class. It still hurts but is almost better now in December.



Next, Cousin Lesley visited us from New York and spent a night. We had lunch with my father, Jack, in Monterey.

Then friend Roberto visited for several days.

My father celebrated his 94th birthday with a party in Santa Cruz.

The Flamenco festival continued for 3 full weeks. There were shows in Santa Cruz and in Berkeley, so we had a lot of driving as well as excitement.

October – Rita's memorial. Another old and beloved friend, David Jones Serva, came from Spain to perform at the second weekend of

the Flamenco Festival. He, along with some other friends, including Pablo, stayed at our home for part of his visit. David, Pablo and Freddie have been friends since they were 17. Again we spent most of our time laughing.

By the last weekend of the Flamenco festival we were so tired that we only went to the show in Santa Cruz! I turned 69 – I was too tired for a big birthday, so my sister Elaine and her husband Ken gave me a family birthday party in our studio.



Freddie gave up Tequila in favor of health.

Our Honda van transmission suddenly gave out (only 62,00 miles) on the way back from an art exhibit and was too expensive to fix. To replace it, we bought a red Ford C-Max Energi plug-in hybrid. We love it!

At the end of October we did another Flamenco show with my students for UN day in downtown Santa Cruz. It was 15 minutes and great. We had two guitarists and Freddie playing the cajon.

November – Bea fractured her hip and finally had an operation. Leia moved out. James and Nick and Michelle are still here. We continue to share Flamenco together as a major part of our lives.

Thanksgiving/Hanukah was wonderful. We had 14 of us, family plus our dear friends from Israel, Margalit and Shlomo, and their daughter and family who live in San Francisco.

I replaced the ram in my computer after I updated the system. It was hard and scary and I had to redo it several times, but thanks to the coaching from a friend and the store where I bought it, I have successfully upgraded my computer. It now runs well and I feel very proud of my accomplishment. That inspired me and so gave me the energy to neaten my computer work area.

December – Another Flamenco show that we couldn't miss –the Spanish Gypsy Flamenco Jerez celebration of the Christmas holidays called Zambomba! Nina brought many of our friends from Spain back for these shows, which we attended both in Berkeley and Santa Cruz. It was wonderful to see these friends again so soon after the Flamenco Festival.

We plan to take it easy for most of the holiday season and not to host a lot of guests. We still find the need to rest and recuperate from this year.

The only visitors we expect will be between Christmas and New Years, when our dear friends Cihltli and Ethan will be here giving a 3-day Flamenco workshop in our studio. We look forward to spending some time with them and taking their workshop.

My father's wife, Peggy, has written a book of her memoirs. She is amazing. And my father is still doing well at 94. Freddie and I have started going to Monterey more often to visit them and also to visit Freddie's mother Bea.



My sister Elaine and her husband Ken keep traveling and doing well, as are their families. We are grateful that we are so close with them, sharing our journeys with aging parents and dying cousins and friends. We are also grateful for our ongoing contact with our cousin Walt and our shared dinners with Walt, Elaine and Ken.

Our assistant Rama continues to help us keep things together here. Now coming only once a week, she has everything under control. We enjoy her time spent here and we are very grateful for her help and her friendship.

Martin, our angel gardener handyman, still keeps this place functioning and in good shape. He also speaks Spanish with me, which has helped me to remember it. He has taught me about when to pick the avocados that are now growing on our trees. Freddie and I are filled with gratitude that Martin is in our lives.

I continue with my shamanic work, psychotherapy work, practicing my Flamenco singing with Madeline, and teaching Flamenco dance.



Freddie spends most of his time working in his guitar shop, both making and repairing guitars.

Freddie and I continue to feel so blessed, in spite of the difficulties we are encountering in life right now. We have wonderful and supportive family and friends. We both have very special and loving families and we are very grateful for that. We have good health, and we live in an extraordinary beautiful and peaceful place. We have a garden full of food and we have music and dance and the making of musical instruments. We are happy and enjoying being together while aging.

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

Freddie and Marianna

