

2008 Holiday Letter from Flamenco Romántico

Hello dear Family and Friends,

We have had another vital and full year dedicated to healing and growth. I am writing this just after returning from a warm, tropical beach 2 week vacation in Isla Mujeres, Mexico, where we attended our good friends', Cihltli and Ethan's, wedding. I officiated at the wedding. The blue and turquoise ocean was the backdrop; the altar was on the white sand.



I almost missed writing our Holiday letter. We are too relaxed! But here it is, because we want to share our year and thoughts with you this holiday season.

In January our good friend Lakshmi, who lives in Sevilla, visited us for 3 weeks. She taught a Flamenco workshop here and I took private classes with her almost every day.

At the beginning of February, overlapping Lakshmi's visit by a few days, our Spanish guests, Juan del Gastor and his wife Lucy, arrived at our home. Juan taught Flamenco classes at UC Santa Cruz that quarter. We all spent wonderful time together for a month and a half. Juan and Lucy gave Flamenco workshops here too and private classes. Again, I had classes in dance and/or singing almost every day!

Juan worked with Freddie almost daily on guitar rehabilitation. Freddie can sing his *falsetas*; he has all his music still in his head! At this point Freddie needed to learn to make sounds on the guitar again, strengthening and re-training his stroke-damaged fingers.

It felt wonderful for us that Spain has continued to come to us. But of course we wanted to return to Spain too, for 6 months this time.

Before we left for Spain, at the end of March we went to San Diego to visit Freddie's daughter Maggie, and our grandchildren Kyle, Katie and Kerra. They recently returned from living in Texas for too long. Unfortunately our son-in-law Jason was out at sea as part of his military duty, so we missed him.

In San Diego we also attended a Flamenco show with them produced and danced in by our close friend Lakshmi. We also visited with other friends who live in San Diego, at a party at Lakshmi's parents' house after the performance.

On April 29th we left for our 6 months in Sevilla, Spain. There we both took intensive classes. Freddie, thanks to Paco Fernandez and Juan del Gastor, is now able to make clear and controlled sounds on the guitar and to play slow falsetas. I have learned a lot of singing and have been polishing my dancing.



We also had fun, as in celebrating both our birthdays in Spain, going to the beach, going out to eat with friends, and visiting more friends in beautiful places. I also got to go shopping in Sevilla with Cihltli for a wedding dress. She and Ethan set a date and a Mexico location for their wedding and Freddie and I bought our tickets and made hotel reservations from Spain.



In June, my son Elun and our two-year-old granddaughter Josie visited us in Spain. We had a ball showing them Sevilla. Josie loved Spain! Unfortunately Elun's wife Donna was unable to join us.

Freddie got an adult tricycle a month before we returned home and so gained independence and good exercise in Sevilla. From then on Freddie rode this bike all the time there.



The 2008 Spain writings and photos are on our website www.flamencoromantico.com. (I will print them for you on request!)

On the home front, our assistant Rama did a wonderful job of handling things at home while we were away and keeping us in touch by email. It was so nice to have her reliable support.

A few days after we returned home at the end of October, we voted in the elections and Obama won the presidency! Ah, celebration.

The day after the elections, about a week after we returned home, Cihltli and Ethan spent a week with us and taught a wonderful Flamenco workshop at our studio. Again I was lucky to have classes from both Cihltli and Ethan almost every day. We would see them again soon at their wedding in Isla Mujeres, Mexico in early December.

Just before Freddie and I left for Mexico, my 89-year old father Jack had a knee replacement. He is still recovering and says that the physical therapy is much worse than the operation.

Then it was off to Isla Mujeres, a quiet, idyllic island near Cancun, in the Mexican Caribbean, for Cihltli and Ethan's wedding. There were 83 of us there. The second week, when all the wedding guests had left, Freddie and I just vacationed and truly relaxed and continued to enjoy ourselves.



Freddie has made great improvements this year. His English speech is much better than before and he now feels confident enough to talk on the telephone. His Spanish is starting to return too. In Spain, Freddie's guitar playing went from almost no sound, to slow, simple falsetas with good sound. He is gaining back techniques with his stroke affected right hand.

Freddie has recently started to walk without his cane. He rode the three-wheeled bike during our last month in Spain. In Mexico he drove a golf cart. People have been amazed at his continual progress. There is certainly hope in the air. He has also started to teach guitar again, although reluctantly at first.



And me? Aside from traveling and taking care of things here, I have a very small psychotherapy practice still going. I am teaching Flamenco dance when in Soquel and studying dance and song when I am in Spain. I still facilitate a monthly Shamanic circle when I am here. I have been enjoying writing more, including my 6-month journal of this year's Spain adventure.

Freddie's mother Bea will turn 90 next February and almost all her siblings and spouses are planning a big party for her here.

My father Jack will turn 90 next September and we will return from Spain early to be here for the festivities, which his wife, Peggy, is organizing.

Freddie's son Mano (Monolo) and his wife Alta are still in Henderson Nevada with our great-grandchildren Inez and Salina and our granddaughter Annette. We look forward to seeing them and a lot more family when they come here in February for Bea's birthday party.

We are also hoping to see granddaughters Christina and Rosie (Mano's daughters) and great-grandchildren Naomi, Mariana and Raylene at Bea's birthday party.

Our stepdaughter Jessamy is still in Nashville with her son Julian.

Our paradise on the mountain feels peaceful and happy. James is still living in the trailer next to the big dance studio and Tami and Brent are still living in the guest cottage.

This has been a year of continued healing for us.

In spite of the grim economic crisis both here and in the world, for us hope is in the air this year, with Obama's election and Freddie's on-going recovery. We are filled with awe and gratefulness at the beauty around us and for our good fortune. Our families are healthy and happy.

Freddie and I walk hand in hand, grateful to be together and for all our wonderful friends and relatives.

Love,

Marianna and Freddie, Flamenco Romántico

