

Flamenco Romántico Holiday Letter 2014

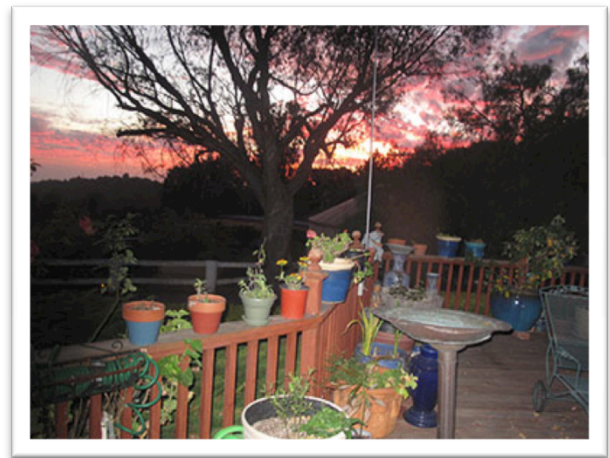
Holiday Greetings from

Marianna and Federico “Freddie” Mejia



Early December - It is raining outside; the trees are blowing in the wind and the yellow/orange/brown leaves litter the porch like paint splattered on a canvas. We are grateful for rain.

Deaths and births –We have had more deaths again this year and it will probably continue. Who else will die soon? It is so strange to have so many friends die. So many have died from cancer and not “old age”. Experiencing so much mortality, seeing old friends now takes on new meaning and we appreciate these visits more than ever.



Last year my cousin Rosanne died. This year two of her daughters (Leilani and Gael) gave birth: Leilani and Danny welcomed baby Coda and Gael and Joel welcomed baby Conner. The cycle continues.

Flamenco Romántico Holiday Letter 2014

January –Our year again started with Flamenco. Dear friend Lakshmi made her annual visit from Spain and taught a great Flamenco workshop. We are looking forward to her visit again next January!



February –After many years of help, I decided to do my own bookkeeping and office work to cut down our costs. Now I spend a lot of time doing it, but I find that I actually enjoy it. Occasionally I miss having an assistant, but I also like what I am doing.

Freddie's mother Bea turned 95.

A new phase of my psychotherapy practice has begun: I now supervise an intern. I enjoy passing on knowledge I have gained throughout my life.

March –While we still mourn the deaths of our good friends who died in 2013, the deaths for this year of 2014 have already started.

The first was our friend, Flamenco singer and artist **Patricia Velasquez**, who died from a cancer contracted in the workplace in Mexico. We attended her memorial in April. Then dear long-time friend, Flamenco dancer **Diana Alejandre**, after years of fighting it, finally succumbed to cancer. After that, **Diane Cornell** from my shamanic drumming circle died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack. Old friend, musician **Lee Birch** died of internal melanoma. And Flamenco dancer **Timo Lozano** died of cancer too. How many more will die this year?

April –Another death: Middle Eastern musician **Haig Manoukian**, whom we spent a lot of time with in Spain when he came with Los Armenios, died of cancer.

On the “Life” side, we had more wonderful Flamenco come from Spain. Our good friends Miguel Funi and his wife Akiko, and Juan del Gator and wife Luci Rozario visited and performed in Berkeley and Santa Cruz, giving workshops later in Santa Cruz at our studio. It was nice to see them and we enjoyed their stay at our home.

May –My best friend from Jr. High school, Gita, visited and we had lunch with my father.

Later in May, my father received a plaque dedicated to him at the Baskin school of engineering (UCSC).

Another piece of good parental news is that we arranged for Freddie’s mother Bea to move, with active help from Freddie’s sister Dorothy and her husband John and Freddie’s brother Timmie and his wife Joanie, from a convalescent home in Monterey into Hearts and Hands convalescent home, 10 minutes away from us. Now it is easy to visit Bea, which we do. And Freddie often visits her by himself when I am busy, because it is an easy drive for him.



June –We celebrated Freddie’s Birthday and our Anniversary with another big party. The years keep going by – Freddie is now 75 and we have been married 14 years already; we have been together for 17 years and friends for 40 years!

Shortly after the party, Freddie and I attended a two-day Shamanic Andean New Year’s healing ceremony and Freddie quit drinking after the first day! Then he started exercising and losing weight! !! Olé. (His goal had been to play guitar again.) While he has had some slip-ups since then, his health has greatly improved and he is feeling good.

After the ceremony, we attended another memorial, a big Flamenco gathering held at the home of Eddie and Catherine Diaz.

Flamenco Romántico Holiday Letter 2014

July – My son Elun and granddaughter Josie came to visit for a week. Daughter-in-law Donna was on a research trip to Russia and so could not join them. We are always happy to see them and to delight in Josie's growing and we had a nice visit with my father Jack and his wife Peggy at their home in Monterey.



August – We visited old friends in Miami because our friend Paco Fernandez from Spain was temporarily working in Miami. While there, we also reconnected with our old friend Carla Ochoa, whom we have known for over 40 years, and we visited with our friend Anibal Diaz from Cuba.

And finally, we got to meet Freddie's wonderful cousin Josie and family on his father's side from the Philippines. We are so glad to have connected with this part of Freddie's family. We learned a lot about the Mejias and very much enjoyed doing it!

September – My Dad turned 95 and celebrated with a wonderful party.

I have finally started to edit my old writings and feel good about it.

Freddie is doing better than ever and is working hard building and repairing guitars.

October – Our Fall Flamenco Infusion: We attended a 4-day annual Flamenco festival in the Bay Area and Santa Cruz and then we hosted inspiring Flamenco dance and singing workshops with the visiting Spanish



Flamenco artists Carmen Ledesma, Jose Mendez and Myriam Vaquero.

We miss dear cousin Rosanne who died last year. Her husband Charles completed her Headstone and we celebrated with a small ceremony placing it on Rosanne's grave. That made Freddie and me decide that when we die we would like to have our ashes mingled and to share the single gravesite that I have reserved in the Jewish cemetery. Earlier this year we completed, under the direction of Shary Farr, a new version of the 5 Wishes (for end of life), with many instructions for what we want when we are dying and afterwards.

While of course we are not yet ready to die, we feel that we have completed arrangements in case we die before we feel ready!!!



I turned 70 and celebrated with a wonderful birthday party. I danced my heart out at the party and felt honored to have so many friends and family members attend.

November –The sun is shining on this fall day. The ocean is clear and fall flowers still color the landscape.

Thanksgiving is coming up. I have been feeling exhausted and so feel forced by my body to hibernate.

Freddie has had only a few beers since he quit drinking, but in general he is alcohol free and his health is reflecting it. He has lost weight and he looks and feels good. He spends hours in his guitar shop and is currently building a guitar for a friend.

After our last shamanic plant ceremony, we celebrated Thanksgiving and I again have my energy! We hosted 9 of us for Thanksgiving, including our parents, other family, and two friends. It was one of those wonderful gatherings where everyone got along beautifully and had a fantastic time. We feel so grateful!

And our biggest news of the year: Tonight, November 28, Freddie played music on the guitar. If he continues, I will have to write his

Flamenco Romántico Holiday Letter 2014

story, as I promised if he were able to play guitar again. Tonight we knew, that with practice, Freddie could express the music that has remained in his head, despite the stroke in 2006. This is a beginning, at the end of this year.

December –The year has moved quickly and it is hard to believe that we are already in December. We finally have rain in Santa Cruz.

I have signed up for a writing class and hope to edit much of my writing.

We are planning our Christmas dinner and looking forward to a visit from Freddie's sister Dorothy and her husband John.

This year –I have been teaching and performing with my students, – including a show at Driftwood convalescent hospital in January (which inspired us to move Bea from Monterey to Santa Cruz), a show at the Mello Center for the Watsonville High Dance club in April, and the Ethnic Dance Festival at the Tannery in September. I also completed my second Flamenco teaching DVD, focusing on style and polishing.

Our Vacation Rental business is doing even better than it did last year. The Camping spots we created have been very popular.

We are grateful for our lush gardens. We have been eating fresh vegetables and fruit all year round, including our own avocados, tangerines and strawberries. We also have been gifted with such beautiful flowers and trees. Much of this is chronicled in the many photos that I cannot stop taking with my iPhone!



Flamenco Romántico Holiday Letter 2014

My father Jack and his wife Peggy are doing well, even though they have slowed down a little. Peggy wrote and published a book about her life that is excellent.



Freddie's mother Bea is doing well, but she continually dreams of escaping the convalescent home and having her own apartment again. Her experience has made both Freddie and me aware of what it is like to live in an institution like that, especially not choosing your own healthy food and being left with processed, salty junk!

That was something I hadn't considered before.

My son Elun, wife Donna and granddaughter Josie are doing well in upstate NY.

We have not had a chance this year to visit with Freddie's son Mano and his wife Alta, nor Freddie's daughter Maggie and her husband Jason and family. Hopefully we can do that next year!

We have been fortunate to have visits this year from Freddie's sister Dorothy and her husband John and from Freddie's brother Timmie and his wife Joanie. And we appreciate that they have all been instrumental in helping care for 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.

Martin, our angel gardener handyman and friend, still keeps this place functioning and in good shape. He also speaks Spanish with me, which helps me to remember it. He continues to complete new projects here and he makes this place better and better. Freddie and I are filled with gratitude that Martin is in our lives.

Flamenco Romántico Holiday Letter 2014

We are grateful for our wonderful land-mates James, Nick, and Michelle who are all doing well; we are so thankful that we enjoy sharing Flamenco with each other, as well as the land and our friendship.



I am dancing, teaching dance, practicing psychotherapy, doing shamanic work, editing my writing, and running a vacation rental. People say I do a lot, but to me it still feels normal. I naively took my retirement in my 20's, which I am happy about. However, I didn't think about what it would be like to work in my "retirement" years! It does keep me active! I have even added walking for 1/2 hour almost every day to my regimen.

And Freddie is active too with his guitar making and repair and now practicing his music on both the piano and the guitar. He has also put together a CD with some of his former music dating from 1968 to 1999.

And so another year has passed and we continue to age and survive and to enjoy our lives together. Freddie and I are grateful for each other and our good fortune to live in a beautiful place, have beautiful friends and family near us and to have our good health.

We wish you all a Happy Holiday Season and New Year.

