

Happy Holidays from Flamenco Romántico 2021

Another strange but wonderful year has passed. We are still in the COVID pandemic, but Freddie and I are now triple vaccinated. Even so, we are careful and rarely leave our home.

I still have not started teaching my group Flamenco classes, but I finished writing my second book, *Turquoise Interlude –A Counterculture Memoir of Free Love, Drugs, and Personal Growth in New Mexico 1968-70*. I did not feel motivated to search for an agent, but still feel satisfied to have completed another book. Please see my blog: www.MariannaMejia.com for excerpts of my writing. Anyone who wants to read PDF versions of *When the Moon Dances*, or *Turquoise Interlude –A Counterculture Memoir of Free Love, Drugs, and Personal Growth in New Mexico 1968-70* is welcome to request the PDF. I have made non-professional audio versions as well, which I would love to share. Please pray that a great literary agent falls into my lap! Instead of working on publishing, I have started writing my third book, “Meeting Freddie –Dancing the Path to True Love.”

I continue my shamanic journey groups online, as well as my psychotherapy practice.

At the very end of last year, we found an incredible, and lovable gourmet cook, Brian Keane. He has made eating fun again, cooking super-healthy food, five days a week, on Freddie’s modified Gerson diet. We drink fresh juices every day made on our two-stage Pure juicer. When we eat, we have races to see who can finish last, savoring each mouthful. Brian’s cooking is better than any restaurant I have been to, and it is always different. We often eat fresh cod, which he gets from a fisherman friend of his. In the summer and fall, most of our vegetables are from our garden. Often, we have tears of gratitude as we eat. It is that good! Brian recommended an alternate cook, Rebecca, for the two days that he doesn’t cook for us. Coincidentally, Rebecca was also an old friend of ours too. I had met her when I belly danced at Caliope’s Greek restaurant in Corralitos in the 80’s. It has been great to reconnect. She is a loving and supportive person as well as a good cook,



Freddie began falling a lot after his operation last October. It turned out to be an undiagnosed UTI. After several falls at home, the paramedics told us we needed a fulltime caretaker. With the help of a nurse and Freddie's wonderful urologist, we finally diagnosed and cured his UTI and he stopped falling all the time. It had almost killed him, and I could see his life force fading. Two treatments of strong antibiotics saved Freddie. He seems to have 90,000 lives! His energy and spark for life returned.

An occupational therapist recommended a caregiver and strongly encouraged me to call her when I procrastinated. Finally, I called. We met Jennifer at the end of



January, and it was love at first sight for all of us! She is a musician and plays bass in a band. She has been a godsend for Freddie, helping him digitize his music, exercising him, bathing him, taping down rugs, organizing his music studio, driving him to appointments. She started working 5-6 days a week, but now works only 4 days a week, as Freddie is much better. Jennifer has become part of our family.

In February, Freddie's favorite cousin, Danny, died after contracting COVID. He was 81 and was a wonderful, sweet person. We miss him.

In March Freddie started six single chemo treatments to make sure no cancer had escaped. When they removed the large cancerous colorectal tumor last October, they had found cancer in one of the 27 lymph nodes which they had also removed, suggesting that remaining nodes could be infected and would spread. Thus, the chemo recommendation. After a PET scan in April and then a lung biopsy in May, they discovered some small lung cancer lesions. Fortunately, they were not metastacized cancer.

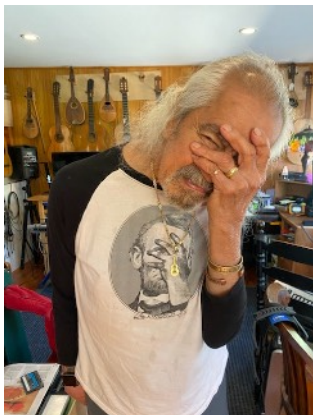
Meanwhile, my brother-in-law, Ken, saw an article about a new targeted radiation machine acquired by El Camino Hospital in Mountain View, the only one of its kind in California. We were able to get a referral from UCSF, where Freddie had consulted, and in August he had six state-of-the-art targeted radiation treatments to get rid of his lung cancer. In November, Freddie had another PET scan. As expected by the radiologist, the lung cancer is now completely gone. There is some inflammation at the

site of his first cancer surgery that Freddie's oncologist wants the endoscopy doctor to look at. The last remaining lesion has neither grown nor shrunk, but it is theoretically precancerous and must be removed.

We had scheduled an endoscopic removal at Stanford in early October, but Freddie's EKG was off and they wanted a stress test. Freddie failed his stress test and had to have an angiogram, which meant that his endoscopy had to be rescheduled. The angiogram showed that his heart was healthy and his arteries are only 30% blocked, which the cardiologist said was good. No one knows why he failed his stress test. So now his 4-5 hour endoscopy is scheduled for December 21, the soonest date they could give us. If it is truly not yet cancerous, they can remove it with this procedure. If it turns out to be



cancer, Freddie would need an actual operation, probably leaving him with an ostomy bag, which he absolutely does not want. So, if the endoscopy fails to remove the lesion, Freddie plans to let it stay. We will probably not know the results before we send this letter. On the positive side, Freddie's November blood test showed negative tumor markers and a good blood count. He is continuing the anti-cancer medicines he got from the CHIPSA cancer hospital as well as maintaining the modified Gerson anti-cancer diet.



In spite of everything, Freddie's spirits are surprisingly good. He has continued to digitize his video and audio recordings and is again working on repairing and finishing the guitars hanging all over his workshop. He truly knows how to live mindfully in the present.

I am fighting my exhaustion and trying to both exercise and rest. After getting so much help, I seemed to fall apart, perhaps because I could. It is so wonderful to have help. I hadn't realized how much I had been doing all these years. In October I began to see a naturopath and she is already helping to restore my energy.



In May, our good friend Cihkli returned here to finish the work for her Masters in Dance program that was still online because of COVID. Freddie, Jennifer, Cihkli and I regularly ate together, laughed a lot, took pictures of our delectable food, and were like family. We all became more conscious of our food because of Brian's exquisite masterpieces of



healthy, healing, food, perfectly and elegantly plated.

A month later, Cihkli brought her dog, Tama, up. After that, Cihkli and I spent afternoons after our meal sitting in beach chairs on our lawn, throwing a ball for Tama while drinking iced coffee and sharing chocolate and garden strawberries. Cihkli named two crows, a buzzard, four deer, and three gophers. We learned how to distinguish vultures from eagles and hawks. Cihkli is such an important emotional support, and the joy of having a close friend nearby is still a precious gift to both Freddie and me. An amazing Flamenco dancer and teacher, Cihkli taught her online classes from our dance studios. Cihkli went home at the end of September. She had to begin teaching in person and of course she needed to spend time with her husband Ethan! We all miss her tremendously.

Our summer weather was exquisite and I swam almost every day until mid-June.



Our neighbors, Janet and Jim, live just on the other side of our pool house. Janet swam with me most days and occasionally both Jim and Cihkli (although not usually together) joined us. It was nice to have company and to have developed a safe pod.

In response to California's high fire danger, we had lots of tree work and brush clearing done to minimize our fire danger. This year, luckily, we were not personally threatened by fires. Jennifer and her boyfriend Steve cleaned up and hauled lots of trash we had accumulated for years behind the barn and behind the dance studio. We hired a rodent specialist who got rid of all the rats in our buildings without killing them. He guarantees his work for a year, and

his assistant comes and checks every month. We are relieved and excited to have made these much-needed improvements to our property

In June, after our first two vaccinations, we felt safe enough to have a vaccinated-only party for Freddie's 82nd birthday and our 21st wedding anniversary. It was heavenly. Freddie's brother Timmie and his sister Dorothy came. Two of our grand-nephews, Nikitas and Gianni, also came. Seeing close family and friends, and dancing to beautiful live music felt like a balm after so much hibernation. In preparing for the party I injured my leg, but didn't think anything of it. However, after the party it became badly infected and for the next almost three months I was forbidden to swim while the deep hole in my lower leg healed! Janet was diagnosed with breast cancer and after her surgery she was banned from swimming as well.



She is fine now and my leg finally healed and we started swimming again in late September. In October I bought a wetsuit, enabling me to swim through November and into December. When I am not able to swim, I walk our beautiful and hilly road for exercise.

By the end of June, our feelings of safety post-vaccination were short-lived because of the breakthrough contagion that started. So we went back into isolation with our pod, glad to have celebrated in that short time where we felt safe.

We have been to a few of Jennifer's outdoor music gigs, which is fun. Her band, the Mermen, have been around for over twenty years! We also went to one outdoor Flamenco event.

In August we went out on Jeylene and Monte's boat and scattered my father's and Freddie's mother's ashes in the ocean, finally. It felt like a completion. We are grateful.



In September, at Cihkli's and Jennifer's urging, we bought a new washer and dryer and discovered that our clothes get much cleaner. We had bought our previous washer in 1997, when we moved here!

We have had occasional overnight visits from old friends, so we are not quite as isolated as we were last year. But this October I did not have a party. Brian and Rebecca cooked for my 77th birthday, Jennifer and Freddie loaded me up with presents, and I had a wonderful, low-key birthday.

We have again postponed our upcoming kitchen remodel. I think about what I want and hope to find a good designer and then do it, now that we have help cooking and keeping us on this complicated anti-cancer diet.

My sister Elaine still calls me nearly every day. She started calling me when Freddie was diagnosed with cancer. She has been and is a wonderful support. She also happens to be an excellent editor and has helped edit my second book.

While I Facetime with my 15-year old granddaughter Josie, I haven't seen her, my son Elun or his wife Donna this year. I talk to Elun weekly and they are doing well. Josie did not flourish with remote learning last year, but now she has turned her school work around and has just made high honor roll. We are proud of her.

We haven't seen Freddie's brother Timmie's wife Joanie, or Freddie's son Manolo (Mano) since COVID began. Mano is dealing with some medical issues, and in November was hospitalized, almost died from blood loss, was operated on, and told he needs a liver transplant. This is very scary. We talk to him frequently. We haven't seen Freddie's daughter Maggie and family or his step-daughter Jessamy this year, but they are well.

Freddie's sister Dorothy moved back here on November 30th. She and her aging dog are now living in our Lavender room. Nick and Michelle still live in the cottage and Michelle is pregnant. Martina still lives here in her "tiny house." Since COVID, all of our long-term land-mates still social distance and don't see each other often, except in passing.

Our garden blooms with healthy sustenance. Lettuce for our green drinks, tomatoes, potatoes, parsley and kale, Poblano and green peppers, carrots and beets,



watercress, basil, green beans, corn, apples, oranges, grapes, and strawberries have nourished us this year. Fresh food from our earth is such a tasty gift.



We are grateful to have Martin in our lives. He is completing the replacement of two of our pool patio walls. He continues to keep our paradise functioning and flowing –his creativity is coupled with skill, competence, and love.

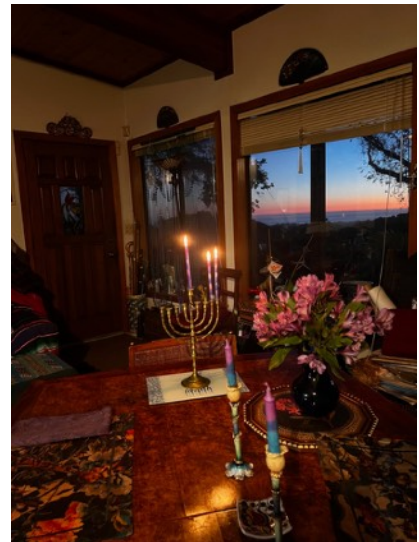
We have also hired a friend of Jennifer’s, Mike, to do some of the maintenance work that Martin hasn’t had time for. Mike is a good person and a hard, competent worker.

And I found a great person to start helping me with filing and office work in December. That hasn’t been done in the two years of COVID. And organizational help is the last piece of the puzzle that I have put together to make our lives run more smoothly.

We also feel very grateful for all our wonderful friends who have sent messages of love and support and offers of help during this time of extra trial.

Freddie and I hope all of you are doing well. We send Gratitude and Love and wish you much Peace, Happiness and Beauty in this coming year. We value being alive and that beauty and love surround us. Happy Solstice, Happy Holidays.

Love,
Freddie and Marianna Mejia



Views of Paraíso

