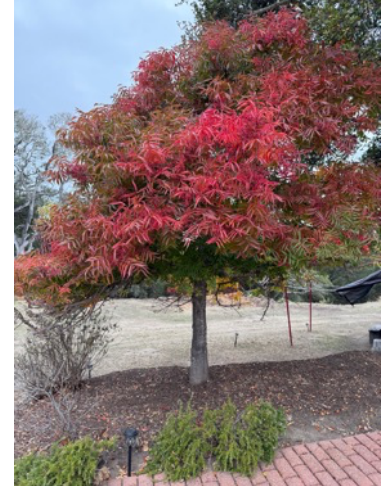


Flamenco Romántico Mejia 2024 Holiday letter



Leaves are dropping and turning red as the rain pelts down and the wind blows. November has almost passed and I am just now starting our holiday letter. The year moves more quickly, but at least it was not filled with



so many deaths and passings, giving us some reprieve from mortality's lessons.

Yet it remains a theme. Our old friend Flamenco singer Luis Agujetas died in Spain. In Santa Cruz, another Flamenco friend passed and some of us danced Sevillanas at his memorial. I was struck by how many years we dancers and musicians had enjoyed together, as many of us now have grey hair and wrinkled skin. But we are still dancing and playing music. That theme carried on at Freddie's 85th birthday party (and our 24th wedding anniversary) in June and also at my 80th birthday party in October. I love that we are still dancing and making music together as we age.

And I am excited to be teaching younger Flamencos what I have learned, continuing to give from the knowledge that has been shared with me for all these years. I am thrilled that Michelle, our friend, dance student, and renter, is my teaching understudy. When I finally get too old to teach, she will carry on. I breathe a sigh of relief. Additionally, a very knowledgeable friend from the Bay Area now comes to our studio once a month to teach Flamenco Cante (song). My students love it. When our dear friends Cihkli and Ethan visited from Los Angeles, Cihkli taught an inspiring

Flamenco dance workshop for my students. Flamenco is alive and well here.

Freddie is making good progress going through our treasure of old videotapes which include some of our own Flamenco performances, shows and classes in Spain, and shows here in Santa Cruz where we hosted the performing artists, Spanish Flamenco legends, who were also super nice people. We hope to digitize all of these many tapes before we die, so they can be shared and enjoyed. Again, we are amazed at our good fortune, as we watch videotapes of our history, amazing Flamenco artists in Spain, class with the best Gitano artists, formal shows, private parties, holidays. Our gratitude is easy. Our lives have been full, and still are, as we wind down and think of our legacies.

Freddie's son Mano almost died this November, but he is now out of the hospital and back at home. Our gratitude is replenished. But mortality is still a theme – I entered my 80th decade. Freddie is half-way through his. Freddie's cancer remains metastasized but not growing. Our healthy diet keeps it at bay and Freddie feels no pain from that.

The pain Freddie was feeling, in both shoulders, greatly subsided when he had a partial shoulder replacement on his right shoulder on September 30. Although he is still recovering, his pain level is significantly reduced and he no longer needs constant icing and Tylenol. He is back to playing cajon for my dance classes and even enjoyed playing at my birthday party several weeks after his surgery. He heals quickly and has an incredible vitality and a zest for his life. As we look over our Spain and performance videos, we feel deep appreciation again for the amazing life we have shared together.



Freddie recovering from his shoulder replacement.

Sometimes I forget how much I have learned in my many years of performing and studying dance. I tend to discount it until I see the tapes and again appreciate all the things I have been privileged to witness, study, learn, and enjoy. Freddie and I have truly led blessed lives and we are not done yet!

In March I attended my stepmother Peggy's memorial. We were not able to attend Marcellus' memorial, which was celebrated in Arizona. In August our old friends Juan del Gastor and his wife Luci visited from Sevilla, Spain. They taught a wonderful Flamenco workshop with Roberto Zamora and then did a private fiesta at Nina's in the Bay Area. Both Roberto and Nina have cancer, but they are still with us. We value every minute with old friends and also with our families.



Dorothy ready to take the bus to Sacramento.

Freddie's beautiful older sister Dorothy still lives here, and at 86 is both feisty and adventurous. Mano, Freddie's son, came to visit us around Freddie's birthday. My little sister Elaine had both a shoulder replacement and a hip replacement



Freddie & Mano

this year. She now has two bionic hips and plans to replace her other shoulder, perhaps in the coming year. She and her husband Ken still travel a lot and when home, she and I talk on the phone almost every night. My granddaughter Josie graduated from high school, and her parents, my son Elun and his wife Donna, are now empty-nesters. They both continue to work hard and we hope to see them in the coming year. Freddie's daughter Maggie is doing well, although they suffered some damage from the storms that terrorized the south, including South Carolina where she and husband Jason live.



Freddie & Jennifer

Jennifer still enhances our lives with her top-quality caregiving and friendship. She is making wonderful progress on the Flamenco guitar with Freddie as her teacher. We now have an alternate caregiver, friend Emi, who is making life after Freddie’s surgery much easier.



Martin

Martin keeps the garden lush while he works on some of the maintenance projects. We value him and the long history we have together. Alex and Arturo are still working on fireproofing the property with their superb artistic craftsmanship, and the monthly improvements astonish and delight us. We hope to finally start the kitchen remodel next year. Brian and Rebecca continue to cook us



Arturo & Alex



Rebecca & Brian

exquisite and healthy meals. Again, it is easy to feel gratitude.



Freddie in his pot garden

Freddie grew large, healthy plants in his pot garden this year. He spent time trimming them after



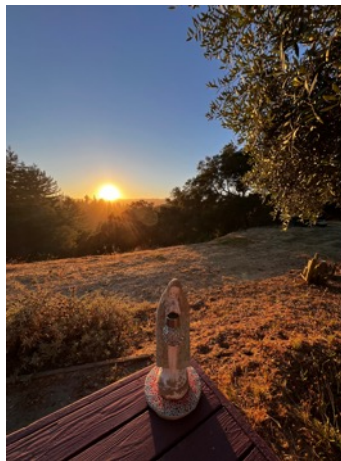
In Freddie's pot garden

his surgery, with help from Jennifer and Dorothy. He loves teaching Flamenco guitar to Jennifer and has now started teaching Nick (Michelle’s husband who is also a dear friend and renter). Martina, who lives in her tiny house here, is currently in South America for the winter.

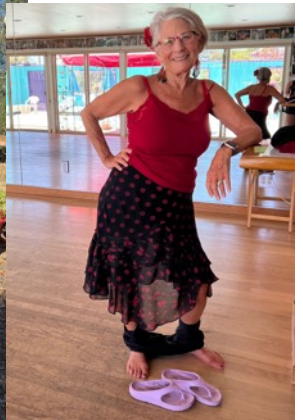
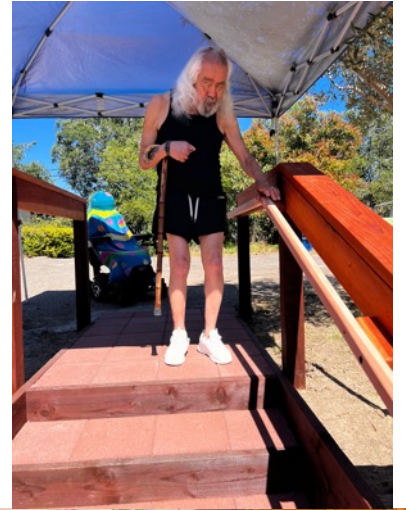
Not wanting to fully retire, I continue to see some psychotherapy clients online, facilitate shamanic journey groups in our yurt, teach two group Flamenco classes and usually an additional private class weekly, and work on my writing. I post monthly blog pieces www.MariannaMejia.com and have currently been exploring themes on aging. In the summer I swam almost every day. Now that cold weather surrounds us, I try to walk. What a pleasure to have my new hip for all these activities. Life is full for both Freddie and me.

Just looking around and walking outside is another blessing. We are surrounded by nature and beauty and love.

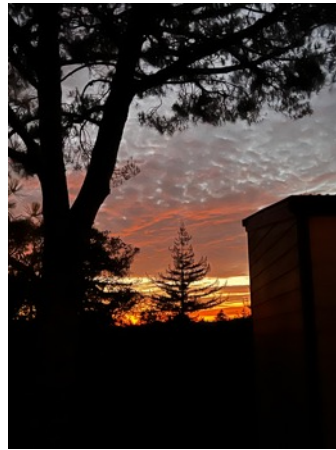
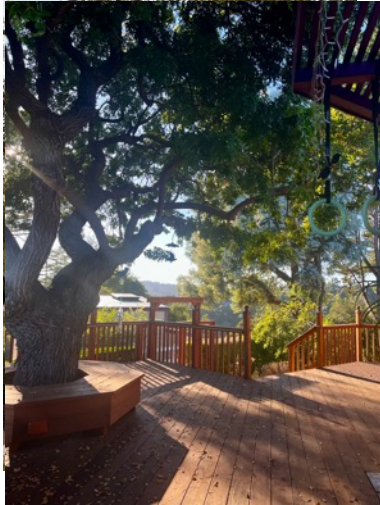
And we wish that for all of you as well. Happy Holidays from Flamenco Romántico, Marianna and Freddie Mejia



Mejia 2024 Holiday letter



Mejia 2024 Holiday letter





Archer & Michelle



Nick & Archer



Michelle, Nick, Archer



Cihlti, Marianna, Freddie, Jennifer, Ethan



Nina & Marianna



Marianna, Roberto, Freddie, Lucy, Juan