

# *“Heading Down to the Shore”*

**By Cathy Hara**

The car is packed  
Do we have everything?  
Not to worry, we can buy it down there.  
Three hours travel on a good day  
More, much more, if there is traffic.  
Heading "down to shore" as they say in New Jersey,  
I still say it after all these transplanted years living in Connecticut.  
Driving slowly or fast along the the highways,  
The pressures ease off my shoulders.  
Each mile further I lose the concerns of where I live  
Replaced with the joys of where I am heading to.  
Driving, driving I can start to see the changes,  
Closer, closer the landscape starts to change  
Hard dirt and grass is replaced with sand and scrubby bushes.  
Big leafy trees become tough bent pines.  
The air has cleaned up its griminess and become salty and fresh.  
The land is flat with the horizon everywhere.  
The anticipation of the first sight of the beach  
Of sinking my feet in the sand  
Hearing the sea birds and listening to the waves soothes me.  
Not too much farther now.  
Highways keep getting smaller, four lanes then two now one in each direction.  
Soon, very soon, I will make the turn up the dirt road  
Leading to the front door of the beach house  
My retreat, my family's respite, our heritage  
The beach house down the shore.

Our memories now are all we have  
The golden place in my heart is what is left.  
Sandy took away the dream, the safe haven,

Replaced it with sand and rubble.  
The family beach home with pictures and memories  
Captured into its walls for over fifty years  
Is lost forever.  
The next long drive to go down the shore  
Will be to see the remains of what was.  
The tension will worsen as the miles pass  
Each mile bringing more anxiety.  
The landscape will be different.  
Blank spots were buildings stood,  
Washed out patches of trees and shrubs  
Replaced with sand and debris.  
When finally arriving  
There will be no street to drive up  
No beach to sink my toes into the sand.  
Nothing is left nothing to save.  
Fire first took the house  
Then the storm surge.  
Gone is the place for respite and renewal  
Gone is the sense of peace  
I once knew as the Jersey Shore.