

says Finale. "To this day, I can recall that smell from the tomato plants."

After graduating from college in 1964, Finale was drawn to the Jersey Shore by his stepbrother, who lived in Point Pleasant. "Being born and raised in Brooklyn, I loved the open space, the coastline, the Pine Barrens, the whole shore thing. At that time there were a lot of woodlands." In the years that followed, Finale met and married Barbara, raised three sons, taught school, founded and edited the literary magazine *Without Halos* from 1985 to 1995, and served as poetry editor (1996-2012) for *the new renaissance*, a literary magazine based in Arlington, Massachusetts.

His collaboration with Jersey Shore Publications (the publisher of this magazine) began in the 1980s. "I knocked on the publisher's door. I took three poems. I guess that was brash," he jokes, "But what the hey?" In 1986, he received an essay assignment from then editor Rich Youmans, which led to a new form of expression for him, and culminated in the three critically acclaimed and best selling volumes of *To the Shore Once More* and three beloved children's books, *A Gull's Story*,



A Gull's Story - ABCs at the Shore.
One of three children's books written by Frank Finale.

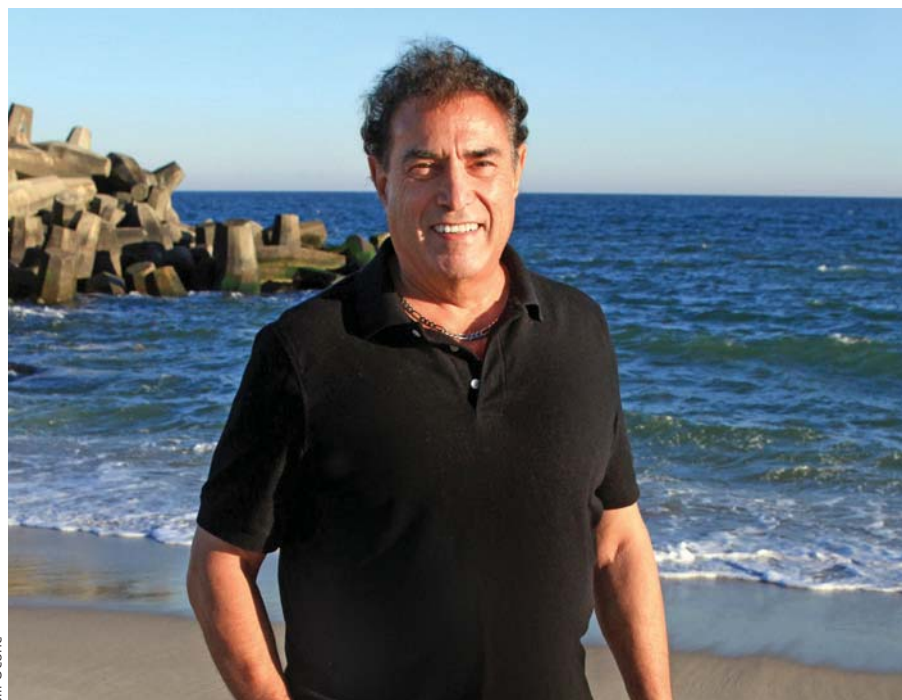
Parts 1-3.

"The best thing is having three books like this," he says of the *To The Shore Once More* volumes. "That's the achievement. Not awards. At this point, yes, I'll create some more, but most of it is behind me...I think I had my fifteen minutes of fame... I just want to kick back and enjoy myself. Maybe that's why you don't see much happy poetry," he muses.

Which is not to say he isn't still

busy with assignments. "I'm working on a poem right now," he tells me. The challenge? Write a poem to accompany a painting for an exhibit on Long Beach Island. The depiction of hanging coats in a closet has Finale off on a tangent of monsters, cruel deeds, Narnia, and the romance of a first kiss. He says inspiration is often helped by an assignment or a prompt. "It's a process, a rumination." He adds, "To get the words right, the right music, the right image. You're juggling a lot of things." On the other hand, "Renewal," a poem about poetry itself, just came to him. "That's a reason I'm fond of it. It doesn't happen that often." Though ultimately, creating a poem comes down to a rather unpoetic task, jokes Finale: "Sitting my ass down and doing it."

Though Finale admits to procrastination, as a writer and one who looks for the deeper meanings in life, he is oddly, not a worrier. Which is perhaps why he is still in great health. "I'm more laid back...I enjoy my wine," he laughs. "It's not good [to worry]. Three fourths of the things don't happen." He says later, "I try to see it in a larger perspective. To have somebody to love, that matters. To enjoy life, that matters. Not money and fame. I guess in that way, I'm more spiritual." ♦



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Jill Ocone