

***The Last Drink
of Todd
McGuire***

(Inspired by a True Tale of
the Maine Woods)
by Roy Wnek



Forty miles to the last paved road, and forty miles
to the last dirt road, and forty last miles to the lone
shack of Todd McGuire.

And every drop of liquor that flowed across Todd's
insatiable lips, travelled the journey of the last forty
to quench his intoxicating desire.

For twenty long years, George and Fred knew well
the last forty miles of this woodland trail,

As they drove, rode, hiked, or sled a steady flow of
liquid cargo, whenever Todd's thirst would have
him hail.

Summer or winter or in-between, it did not matter,
but upon one thing you could surely reckon.

Todd would radio a tardy need for a quick supply,
and the trail of the last forty would promptly
beckon.

The winter trail was by far the worst but Todd had
a powerful thirst and even more powerful friends
to match.

Grand Old Bear was Todd's whiskey of choice and
always worth delivery of a timely batch.

George woke to a serious snow flurry, while his ham radio squawked frantic despair.

As Todd cried out his urgent need for more of the gentle Old Bear.

With a curse of procedure that matched his curse of sobriety,

A well-soused Todd keyed his mic to broadcast thirsty anxiety,

“Good morning, you old so-and-so’s, but I’m in a tight pickle with a desperate need.

I’m really quite thirsty and am running quite low;
So, bring the Old Bear with the greatest of speed.”

George offered prompt relief with a proper call-sign and sealed his promise with a crisp “over and out.”

But Fred shook his head at the ugly sky, and the grim weather that threatened their route.

A serious snowfall began, as George swiftly packed the liquid supplies.

With practiced care he wrapped each bottle; still Fred watched with worried eyes.

The yardstick nailed to the front porch rail was losing fresh inches to a steady snow.

All the while, Fred feared the last forty would now be brutally cold and terribly slow.

Bundled men in orange silhouette made snowmo-
biles ready,
While the fast-falling snow had gobbled-up four
inches already.

From the grey morning sky, the snow fell heavy
and wet.

As George gave a radio check from his hand-held
set.

“Help guys! Only ten shots left and they may not
last,” Todd replied in a slurred shout.

“Standby, and please don’t worry,” came George’s
complete assurance. “We’re on our way now; so,
over and out.”

“Please hurry guys, it’s no longer funny,” was
Todd’s plea, “And whatever you do, just don’t
dawdle.

You can forget the lawyers, guns, and money;
simply bring me the good stuff, Old Bear in a bot-
tle.”

Todd’s worried voice sobbed with the sound of
faint tears,

As he frankly confessed, running out was one of his
very worst fears.

His mournful laments were soon overcome by the
crackle of static,

Even if Fred thought this was all a little too melo-
dramatic.

George yelled out loud for them to step on the gas
and jam all the gears,
While the lonely silence of dead air hung heavy in
their cold ears,

George and Fred set off across the last forty and on
to Todd's shack.

Two bottles of the Old Bear rode along, nestled se-
cure in each knap-sack.

The first ten of the last forty went painfully slow,
owing to deep snow and some really rough ice.
By the time they reached Spencer's birch, a tipsy
Todd had already called twice.

"Hey fellas, I've drunk three shots and I'm down
to a mere seven." Todd cried in utter despair."

George answered with sage advice, "Stay calm,
Todd. Go slow and conserve the Old Bear."

The steady tone that George had offered was the
right patch for Todd's leaky nerve,
While a round of hot cocoa fortified his own dwin-
dling reserve.

George and Fred started the second ten of the last
forty without much doubt.

As they rounded the old cranberry bog, Todd broke
squelch in a frightened shout.

Todd's exact words were chopped rough by radio
static and his own sloppy tongue.

But George's tuned ear caught the sad gist of the
woeful song Todd had just sung.

Three shots went down for Todd's liquid lunch and
one more upset by his unsteady hand.

The lonely three left would have to last, since run-
ning out was more than Todd could really with-
stand.

When Todd drifted off for a well-lubed nap,
George guessed he'd be out for a good twelve
miles or so.

Now in third ten of the last forty, Fred favored their
slim odds against the cruel snow.

At Isaac's Crossing with eight miles to go,
George's estimate proved good but the trail stayed
tough.

Then a revived Todd broadcast out, a plaintive plea
for speedy arrival of the good stuff.

"Step on it, guys, I've only three shots to go," Todd
bemoaned his meager supply.

"Hold on, Todd, we're getting close; make those
three shots last, came George's encouraging reply.

One shot down and they raced on; two shots down
and their sleds tore through the snow

George and Fred were really pouring it on; they felt
close with only three miles to go.

At the two mile point, it seemed for certain they'd
arrive in time.

But a vanquished Todd radioed in, “I may have no choice, guys, but to down my last shot anytime.”

“If that’s the case, old buddy, take your time and sip your drink slow,” George suggested a most unnatural act.

With a click of the mic, the radio fell silent; whether Todd had followed the advice would be an unknown fact.

When they began the last mile to Todd’s snow-bound place,

George and Fred found themselves in a desperate race.

Yet, they saw themselves as true heroes saving the day.

With the grand Old Bear in triumph leading the way.

In a gallant scene they had mentally rehearsed,

Into Todd’s desperate cabin they would suddenly burst,

But smack in the trail, bold yellow letters on a sharp red sign stopped them dead in their tracks,

With the perilous threat of persecution, prosecution, and other punitive attacks.

This dire decree imperiled all who’d dare venture upon the newest land in the regime,

Of Beatrice Battle, self-proclaimed witch of the

north woods and a land-baroness supreme.

The witch's grand plan to own the whole state had
her grab up land her whole lifelong.

She took easy acreage to exclude all travelers and
press neighbors to sell for a cheap song.

She cared not of the nuisance that a purchase caus-
es nor whomever she offends.

But all would comply, for Beatrice had a wicked
thirst for land and even wickeder friends.

It wouldn't matter how fast our heroes had raced or
how slow the last shot had been sipped.

The dwindling Old Bear just couldn't last, even as
across the witch's own land our heroes heedlessly
clipped.

The silent radio no longer sent out Todd's cries for
liquid relief.

Still a heroic arrival in the nick of time was
George's hopeful belief.

Nevertheless, they arrived too late to be his
supplier,

Or to share a last drink with old Todd McGuire.

They found his cabin looking just fine, but Todd
and his Old Bear had completely expired.

The cause of Todd's death was never quite clear,
and even stumped those medically attired.

Whether it was an unlucky fall or an untimely
stroke that had laid Todd low,
Or merely the unnatural act of sipping his Old Bear
unreasonably slow.

In the end, suffice to say, watch out for detours
along the last four-o,
And never, but never, sip your last shot a little too
slow.



I'd like to thank George McLaughlin of Hanson, MA, for
sharing his story of the actual event, which was the inspiration
for this fanciful yarn. R.W.