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Along the Goodpaster River, Near Big Delta, Alaska

John Smelcer

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Along the Goodpaster River, Near Big Delta, Alaska

All summer, my father and I raced up and down the river
hauling building materials for my cabin—

first up the glacial Tanana, then left on the Goody.

Imparting another life lesson,
my father made me saw every cut by hand.
“Make you appreciate it more,” he said.

One trip, coming around a river bend,
a moose calf swept in the rapids
tumbles head over hooves,
her dumbstruck mother waiting on the other side.

My father brings our flat-bottom boat in close.

I put my arm around her neck,
hold her head above water,
our faces pressed together.

My father steers to shore where I jump out
and heave her up the steep bank.

Without thanks she runs to her mother,
they vanish in a tangle of willow.

John Smelcer

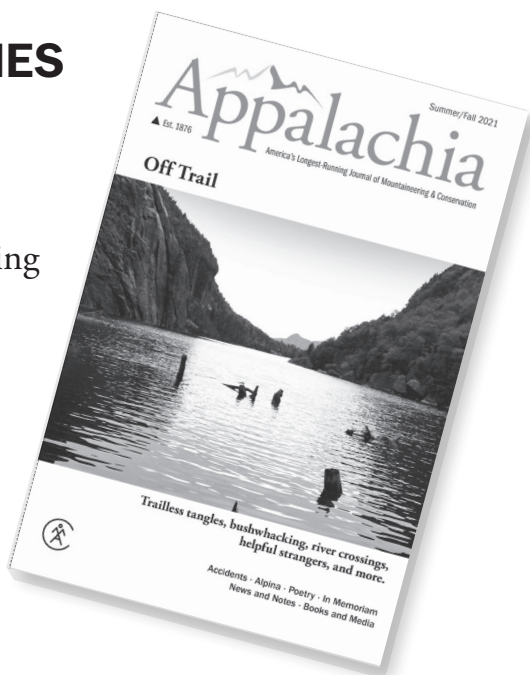
Throughout the summer of 1987, poet JOHN SMELCER and his father hauled construction materials up the Goodpaster River, a clear-water tributary of the Tanana River, to build the author's first cabin.

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