

2021

## Along the Goodpaster River, Near Big Delta, Alaska

John Smelcer

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### Recommended Citation

Smelcer, John (2021) "Along the Goodpaster River, Near Big Delta, Alaska," *Appalachia*: Vol. 72 : No. 2 , Article 27.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia/vol72/iss2/27>

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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*

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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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