

Don Colburn

## Crossing the Muddy

The Muddy Fork of the Sandy River  
is clouded green-brown with fine silt  
a glacier scraped off the mountain.  
Where the log bridge washed out  
and the trail ends in swift water,  
you cannot tell how deep it goes  
or where the footing lies if there is footing.  
We scrambled the brushy cutbank upstream  
and found a tight spillway between boulders.  
Not five feet across, an easy leap  
if this were a playground or a sawdust pit.  
I heaved my ungainly pack over,  
then practiced with my eyes and jumped,  
stumbling onto the far solid rock.

Solid? With the kid still  
on the other side of hurling water?  
*Don't look down. Keep your weight moving  
forward.* She locked in, balancing,  
and flew to a graceful landing  
as I caught her thin wrist. *Momentum,*  
she said. *It's the key to everything.*  
What could she know, at 13, of everything,  
besides how to take aim and throw your all  
in one direction? Which was enough  
on opposite sides of the Muddy—  
for her, unschooled in second thought,  
and me, one hand reaching over white water,  
all momentum the other way.