

## **SPRING COMES TO THE IOWA RIVER**

By Gary Stein – Silver Spring, Maryland

In early March  
ice moans  
as a boy skids and skates  
testing the surface.

An old man stands  
in ruffled grass  
on the last edge  
of winter wondering

if the mud sucking  
his shoes means ice  
may soon surrender  
its secret to sunlight.

How many hours, how  
much heat can it bear  
before cracking starts,  
before white sheets shoot

the air? Should he yell  
the boy in? Must he belly  
crawl out with a long stick  
to pull the young fool,

numb as a fish,  
from the cold, wet maw  
of the world? Or trust  
and just go home to warmth

and let the lone boy  
melt into the thin ice  
of memory, laughing  
at the wind's punch

while the river moans  
like a humpback whale  
or a mourning mother,  
washing over them both.