

# National Balloon Museum

## Dignitaries Gathered for Ground Breaking at Nationals

On August 2, 1986, ground was broken for the new National Balloon Museum in Indianola, Iowa. On hand for the ground breaking were Peter Stamats, president of the National Balloon Museum Board, and fund drive co-chairman Sid Cutter, Leo Eisenberg, Don Kersten and Chuck Laverty. Also present were Indianola Mayor Irene Richardson and Iowa Governor Terry Branstad.

The ground breaking followed years of work by representatives of the National Balloon Museum, Inc., a non-profit corporation created jointly by the BFA and NBC in 1977 to "build, operate and maintain a National Balloon Museum in Indianola, Iowa."

Marilyn A. Gardner gets an update on the status of the National Balloon Museum from Pete Stamats for *Ballooning*.

**Q:** Ground breaking for the new National Balloon Museum took place on August 2nd. What was the significance of this ground breaking, and what's your next step?

**A:** It signifies that plans for the National Balloon Museum are moving forward, and that our site has been finalized. Actually, we intend to start construction of the building next summer.

**Q:** How much money is needed to complete Phase I, and what will be your fund raising goal for Phase II?

**A:** We originally divided our total funding need of one million dollars into two Phases of \$500,000 each. In accordance with that plan, the building design gives us the flexibility to construct the museum in phases, allowing for future expansion. We need to raise another \$200,000 to go ahead with Phase I, and also to pay for fund raising costs and the cost of borrowing against our pledges to get construction started immediately.

**Q:** Tell me about your site. Do you consider it a strong choice?

**A:** Yes, we're quite pleased with it. The site accommodates our physical requirements, nicely, and it's conveniently located on Highway 65/69 on the north edge of Indianola. The museum will be located about 15 minutes from Interstate 80, a major cross-country highway, and this



Photo by Thom Roberts

will enable us to attract visitors with a standard "tourist attraction" signpost on the highway. Des Moines, the state's largest city and capital, is less than 20 miles from the museum site.

**Q:** How did the National Balloon Museum obtain the site in Indianola?

**A:** First Central Bank of Indianola generously donated the land to the City of Indianola as our museum site and the City, in turn, is leasing it to us in perpetuity. The City of Indianola is also providing a substantial donation by picking up site development costs, including roads and utilities, which will run around \$65,000.

**Q:** Where have the funds that you've raised so far come from?

**A:** Principally from balloonists and ballooning enthusiasts nationwide. Leo and Jill Eisenberg, of Kansas City, deserve special mention because they really kicked off the campaign with a magnificent challenge gift of \$100,000. We've also received two grants from the state of Iowa since the plan to create a National Balloon Museum was first established, and Iowa Governor, Terry Branstad, has offered to help us with the final \$200,000 drive to make construction possible in 1987.

**Q:** The U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championships have been held in Indianola since 1970. Last year, the BFA considered bids from other communities for the first time. Does the possibility of an eventual change in the location of the Nationals affect your plans for the

Museum?

**A:** We looked very carefully at that eventuality, of course. Our conclusion was that the site of the Nationals and the site of the Museum are two separate issues. The Board of Directors of the BFA agreed with this position and unanimously endorsed Indianola as the site of the museum. Our feeling is that, regardless of what may happen in the future, Indianola is already a historic site for the sport of ballooning.

**Q:** Who will be taking care of day-to-day operation of the museum?

**A:** The BFA Museum Committee has traditionally operated the museum program with a corps of volunteers. Jim and Maxine Weinman of Indianola have chaired that committee for many years and we hope they will continue the excellent job they've done in the new building. Operating funds will be acquired from memberships, shop sales, office rental, grants, donations and other fund raising events. Incidentally, we already have more than 900 charter members.

**Q:** Anything else you'd like to add?

**A:** The project is underway. I hope anyone who hasn't yet participated and is interested in making a donation will contact the museum. All contributors, by the way, will be recognized on a permanent plaque in the new museum. Donations can be made to the National Balloon Museum, 707 North C. Street, P.O. Box 149, Indianola, IA 50125.