

Mercy Medical Center Groundbreaking Ceremony

By Jerry Gordon, Photos by Buzz Diehl

On Saturday, June 7th members of the Chesapeake Region, AACA were invited to participate in the official groundbreaking ceremony for the new 18 story hospital tower at the Mercy Medical Center on St. Paul Street in downtown Baltimore. The ceremony was a well-staged, theatric production featuring local and state dignitaries, a parade, unusual props, and fireworks.

Our cars were assembled at the hospital garage early in the morning to transport Maryland Lieutenant Governor Anthony G. Brown, Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon, Baltimore Archbishop Edwin Frederick O'Brien, and several hospital executives along the four-block parade route. Also in the parade were some unusual construction equipment, fire and emergency equipment, and a Baltimore tourism trolley filled with Sisters of Mercy nuns.

The parade traveled the short route and all the dignitaries were delivered to the

presentation stage. Besides the politicians and the Archbishop they included William Henry *Cardinal* Keeler Archbishop Emeritus of Baltimore; Barbara Wheelley, RSM, PhD, President of the Sisters of Mercy, Regional Community of Baltimore; Helen Amos, RSM, Executive Chair, Mercy Health Services Board of Trustees; Thomas R. Mullen, President and CEO of Mercy Health Services and Mercy Medical Center; and Wilma Rowe, MD, President of the Mercy Medical Center Medical Staff.

The site of the new hospital tower is just a big hole in the ground now, after the old structure was imploded last year. Whiting-Turner, the general contractor for the \$400 million project, set up a grandstand facing the hole, which had a multi-story construction crane in the area. Suspended from the crane was a silver-painted girder with several high intensity lights.

The ceremony started with the Mercy high school Madrigals singing the national anthem. After each speaker finished, one of the lights on the girder was lit until all of them were blazing.

At the conclusion of the speeches the girder was lowered into the construction hole and a fireworks display was set off. And for the finale of this event, the side of the nearby parking garage had a multi-story drape that was dropped revealing a huge rendering of the new hospital tower.

The convertibles provided by Chesapeake Region members were: Mary & Ed Allen, 1957 Chevrolet; Read Van Zile & Joanne Day, 1963 Thunderbird; Barbara & Buzz Diehl, 1966 Pontiac; Jerry Gordon, 1964 Lincoln; Allen Pogach, 1970 Oldsmobile; Bob Quante, 1939 Plymouth; Julie & Ron Siegrist, 1966 Cadillac; and Gary Wilmer, 1963 Oldsmobile.



Pictured clockwise from the top left: Mary & Ed Allen with William Henry Cardinal Keeler, Archbishop Emeritus of Baltimore; artist's rendering showing the new hospital tower; Joanne Day & Read Van Zile in their 1963 Thunderbird; Bob Quante's 1939 Plymouth; and Gary Wilmer's 1963 Pontiac.

