By the time this Advocate reaches its readership construction will have started on the long-awaited new law building. The joint resolution authorizing the sale of bonds to fund the building was passed by the Iowa General Assembly in late April and signed by Governor Terry Branstad on May 9, 1983. Because planning for the project was kept on a "fast track" for the past 18 months in anticipation of final state approval, construction bids on the project were sought within weeks after the bill was signed. On June 14th, sealed bids from eight major contractors were opened and PCL Construction Ltd. of Minneapolis was determined to be the low bidder. The low bid was well below the project budget, even after all desired bid alternates were accepted. The construction contract was approved and signed by Board of Regents officials during the last week of June. The contractor plans to begin excavation by mid-July. The estimated completion date is February, 1986.

As plans for the new facility have taken shape under the watchful eyes of Architect Gunnar Birkerts, expectations for a truly exceptional building have risen steadily. Birkerts' recent selection for three special honors has fueled these hopes to burn even higher.

First, Japanese Publisher Yukio Futagawa picked Birkerts to be the fifth in a series of contemporary architects to be featured in a full-color book displaying their innovative designs. Earlier subjects of Futagawa publications include I. M. Pei and Eero Saarinen. Next, Birkerts finished sixth in a nationwide poll of Deans of Architectural Schools to determine the TOP TEN American Architects. Most recently, Birkerts was named as the first recipient of the Plym Distinguished Professorship in Architecture, awarded by the University of Illinois for distinctive achievement in design. As construction starts on the new law building, there is every reason to believe Birkerts has again successfully met the challenge he describes as follows:

"If you have a building that has a need, a particular charge to do something; if there is soul somewhere in the program, that the building has to talk, inspire or project; then this is the biggest challenge: To express the soul, the feeling, the meaning, the essence of what it is and what it does."

It will not be a surprise to knowledgeable observers if the eye-catching building that Birkerts has designed to meet the special needs and "express the soul" of the Iowa Law School wins him yet another international award.
Yet Another Hitch Eliminated

After the Advocate went to press, a lawsuit was filed in Des Moines challenging the legality of the Board of Regents' acceptance of the low bid on grounds that the bid was submitted one minute after the official deadline. Judge Luther Glanton initially issued a stay prohibiting the Board from accepting the bid, but after a 4-day hearing, the stay was lifted and the Board was allowed to proceed with contract negotiations. Judge Glanton held that the low bid was indeed filed one minute late, but because there was no showing of fraud or favoritism, the Board could waive the irregularity in the public interest. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new building will be held September 14, 1983, but actual excavation started on August 15 and work is already well under way.