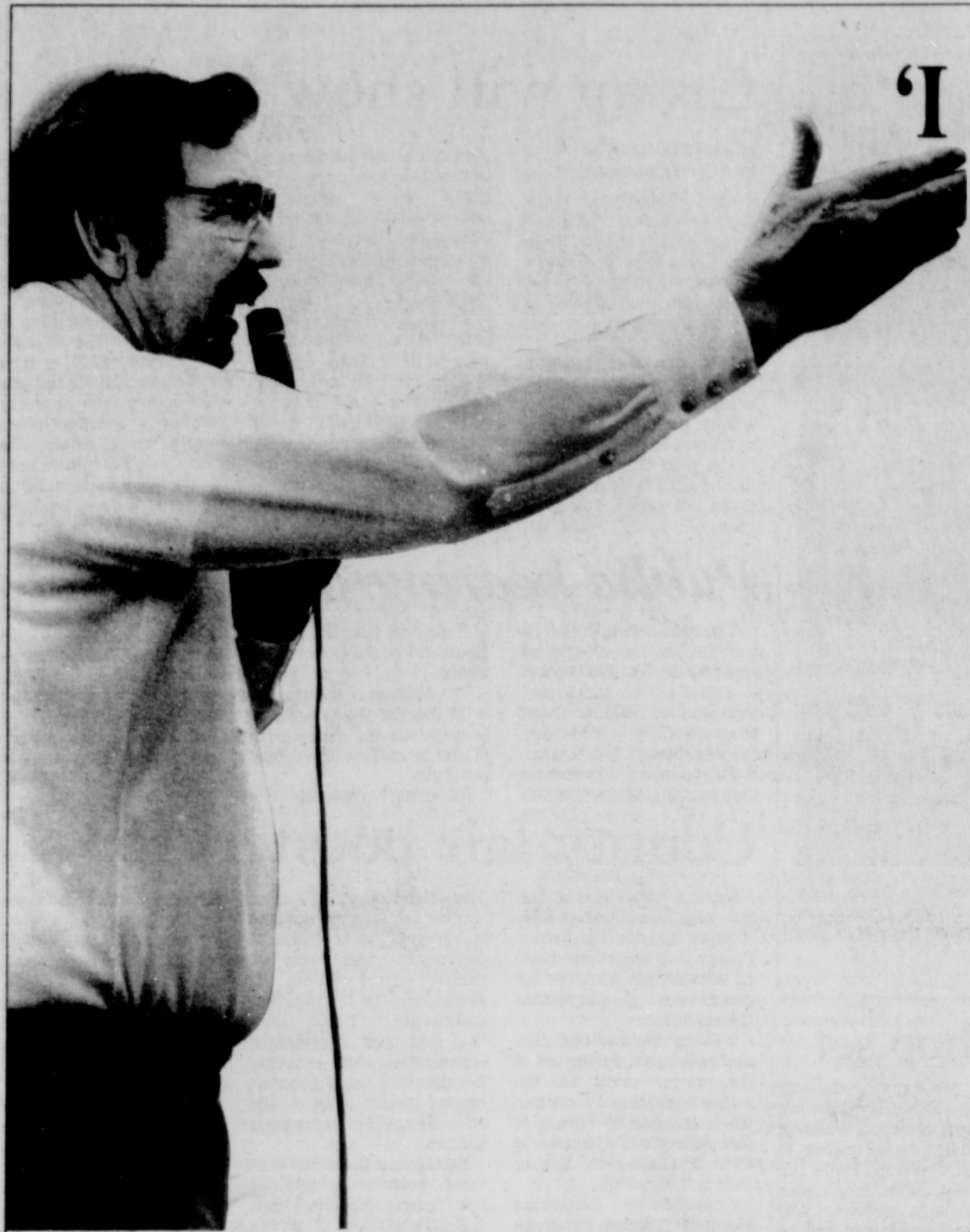


# 'I have 4, who will give me 6?'



"There's lots of room at the top for the best" an old auctioneer told him once and it seems that Paul Spence is headed right for the top.

The Sandy resident has only been in the vocal occupation since 1978 but he has moved up fast and he seems to be in great demand both locally and regionally.

A bonded and licensed auctioneer, Spence is senior associate auctioneer at the TransAmerica Auction Co. in Portland.

Public auctioneering became an alternative occupation for Spence when he got "crippled up" in an accident and couldn't work in his home builder construction profession. He has had five back operations since the 1973 mishap.

The energetic and likeable Spence said he got tired of laying around and collecting worker's compensation so he went looking for something to do. What he found was a job that pays so well and that he enjoys so much that he wishes he would've started the new career as a young man.

"I wish I could've done it (auctioneering) 20 years ago," he said. "It is easy to teach a young guy to be an auctioneer." It's not so easy to learn when you get older, he added.

Spence went to auctioneering school at the Western School of Auction in March 1978. The Billings, Mont. school has a two-week course that teaches the basics of the profession, he said. The total course lasts 127 hours.

You only have two weeks to learn to be an auctioneer? Spence was asked.

"They know within three days if you have what it takes to be an auctioneer," he answered. If they don't think you can cut it in three days, then you get your money back and a goodbye, he added.

But you only learn the basics in school, Spence emphasized. Most of it you learn on your own and from talking to old auctioneers.

One of the things that is learned in school is how to breathe from your stomach, Spence said. The experienced auctioneer said he now can make a sale before taking a breath of air.

"That's why all auctioneers have big tummies," he said with a laugh. "You have to talk fast for a long time. I sell an item without breathing. The numbers are in your head, you don't have to think about them, they are there automatically."

Knowing how to read people seems to be a trait of auctioneers. "You have to know when to yield and when to hold them and when to fold them,"



Paul Spence

Spence said.

"I love meeting people," he says when asked why he wanted to be an auctioneer. "I like to meet people, like to travel and like livestock and machinery, things I auction off."

The Montana native specializes in auctioneering heavy industrial equipment, livestock and horses. Despite being a noted auctioneer who makes good money he makes 10 percent of profit earned at the big auctions plus a day's salary, Spence always finds time to do local charity auctions.

His most recent charity gig was Feb. 13 when the local Girl Scouts held a cake auction at Firwood School. A capacity crowd filled the gym as Spence helped sell approximately 60 cakes for \$400. Girl Scouts made the cakes with the help of their fathers.

Spence also was the volunteer auctioneer for local Cub Scouts who earned \$359 for fewer cakes. The Cub Scout cakes went for approximately \$10 each while the Girl Scout cakes sold for \$6 each.

He says he loves doing charities and has volunteered his time and expertise for the Sandy Merchants, the Portland League of Secretaries, the Oregon Epilepsy Association and the Young Republican's Charity Auction.

The day before he did the Girl Scout gig, Spence was in Denver making plans for a \$2.5 million industrial equipment auction. The big auctions need six to eight months of preparation before they are held, he noted.

Spence had a sore throat after the Girl Scout auction because he forgot to have a fresh lemon with him in Denver, he said. He always carries lemons with him at auctions because they keep his mouth moist. Bourbon and lemon juice are also good for hoarse throats, he said.

Past auctions included a classic car auction held in Portland during the fall when the top car, a Rolls Royce, went for \$70,000.

He is currently preparing for, besides the Denver sale, a public auction for purebred Arabian horses to be held in Seattle in October of this year. The 80 head of horses should gross \$1 million in sales, he added. It will probably take him five minutes to sell each horse at a minimum of approximately \$50,000.

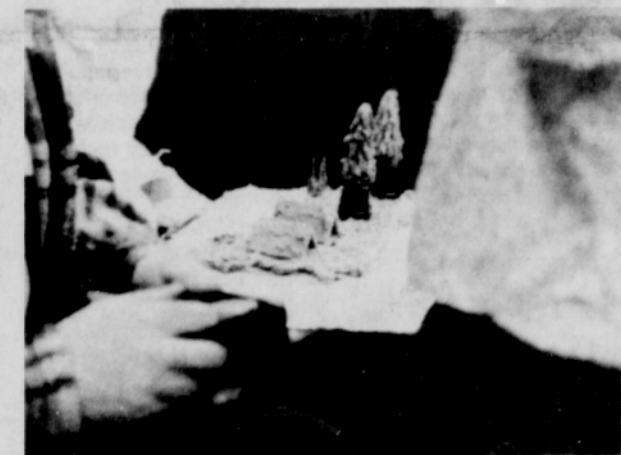
As in every auction, it is expected that some of the horses won't be sold, Spence said. In that case, the owners will lose the \$250 entry fee per horse.

Most of the big auctions are held in the summer despite the fact that on hot days people won't bid and on cool days they will, Spence said.

Spence's dream is to go back to Billings where he went to auctioneer school and do an auction where his instructors can see how good he has become.

"You don't really know how good you will be until you get out in the field and work at it," he said. "You leave school without knowing if you'll make it or not."

The popular auctioneer seems to be headed toward the top where there's lots of room for the best.



Sandy resident Ernest Marshall "bids" during the cake auction. Sitting next to him is Tammy Brimser, 12, of Sandy. He ended up buying the cake, one decorated with houses and trees, made by Girl Scout Becky Piper and her father, Ralph.



Boring third grader Sandy Gates, 8, gets involved in the bidding herself and buys a cake.

A large crowd participated in the Girl Scout cake auction held Feb. 13 in the Firwood School gym. The local Girl Scout organization made approximately \$400 at the fund raising event which was conducted by expert auctioneer Paul Spence.