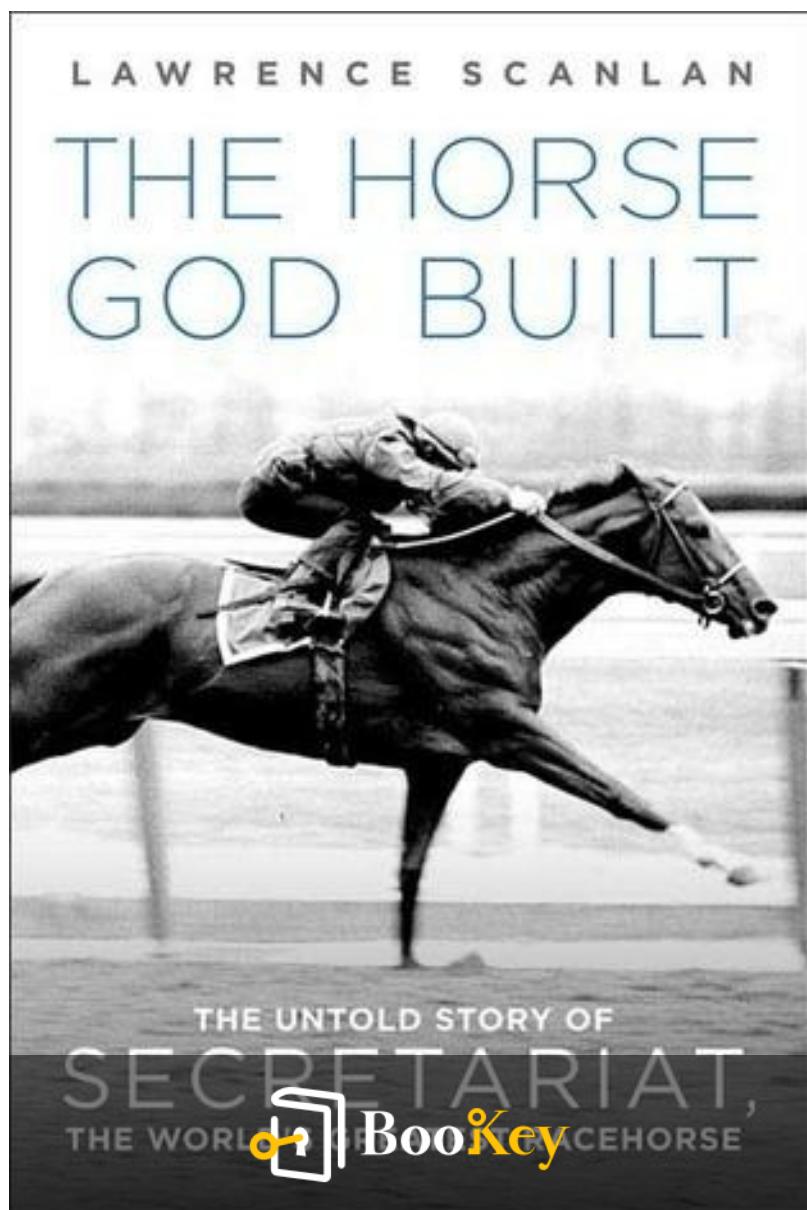


The Horse God Built PDF

Lawrence Scanlan



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The Horse God Built

The Legacy of a Legendary Racehorse and His
Devoted Groom

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About the book

In "The Horse God Built," Lawrence Scanlan masterfully intertwines the heart-wrenching tale of one of history's greatest racehorses, Secretariat, with the untold story of his devoted groom, Eddie Sweat. This compelling narrative goes beyond the typical sports biography, delving deep into the bond between man and horse, revealing a profound partnership rooted in mutual respect and tireless dedication. As you turn the pages, you will not only revisit Secretariat's awe-inspiring Triple Crown triumph but also gain insight into the unsung hero behind the legend, whose relentless care and love helped shape a champion. This is not just a story about racing; it's a testament to the extraordinary connection that can exist between humans and animals, urging us to see the heartbeats behind the headlines.

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About the author

Lawrence Scanlan is a distinguished Canadian author and journalist, known for his compelling narratives and meticulous research. With a career spanning several decades, he has written extensively on a variety of subjects, including sports, horses, and social issues. Scanlan has contributed to numerous prestigious publications such as *The Globe and Mail*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Maclean's*, and is celebrated for his ability to weave intricate details into engaging storytelling. His deep passion for equine culture is particularly evident in his acclaimed works like "*The Horse God Built*," where he delves into the lives of iconic horses and the people connected to them. Scanlan's writing not only captivates but also educates, reflecting his profound understanding and empathy for his subjects.

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Chapter 1 : The Legendary Secretariat - A Racing Phenomenon

Secretariat, often heralded as one of the greatest racehorses of all time, captivated the world with his unparalleled prowess and indomitable spirit on the racetrack. His career is a testament to excellence, marked by staggering victories and records that stand the test of time. Born in 1970, Secretariat quickly rose to fame, culminating in his extraordinary achievement of winning the Triple Crown in 1973. This feat had not been accomplished in 25 years, making his triumph even more monumental.

Secretariat's major victories are etched into the annals of horse racing history. His performance in the Belmont Stakes, the final jewel of the Triple Crown, remains particularly awe-inspiring. In a display of sheer power and speed, Secretariat won the 1.5-mile race by an astonishing 31 lengths, setting a record time of 2:24 that still stands today. This race solidified his status as a legend and left an indelible mark on the sport.

Moreover, Secretariat's dominance was not confined to the

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Triple Crown races. Throughout his career, he set multiple records, including the fastest times in both the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness Stakes. His near-flawless performances earned him the title of Horse of the Year twice, in 1972 and 1973, an honor that underscored his extraordinary abilities and consistent excellence.

The cultural and historical impact of Secretariat transcends the world of horse racing. He captured the imagination of a nation, becoming a symbol of purity and greatness in sports at a time when America was grappling with various societal upheavals. Secretariat's story brought joy and hope to many, and his image was emblazoned across magazines, newspapers, and television screens, making him a household name. His legacy continues to inspire future generations of racing enthusiasts and stands as a benchmark against which all racehorses are measured.

The allure of Secretariat's story lies not only in his remarkable achievements on the track but also in the broader context of his impact. He broke new ground in horse racing, drawing unprecedented attention to the sport and setting a standard of excellence that has rarely been matched. Secretariat's legacy is a testament to the power of

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determination, the beauty of athletic prowess, and the enduring appeal of a true champion.

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Chapter 2 : Eddie Sweat - The Unsung Hero Behind the Legend

Eddie Sweat - The Unsung Hero Behind the Legend

Eddie Sweat stands as a figure of deep significance in the story of Secretariat, a story often dominated by racing statistics and public adoration. Sweat, Secretariat's loyal and dedicated groom, was the unsung hero whose meticulous care and profound bond with the horse played a pivotal role in the champion's extraordinary career. He was responsible for the early mornings and late nights that were crucial to maintaining Secretariat at peak condition, yet his contributions often went unnoticed by the public eye.

Sweat's days began before dawn and ended well after dusk, embodying the very spirit of dedication. Every morning, Eddie would be at the stable, ready to attend to Secretariat's needs. From feeding him the best grains to ensuring his stall was immaculately clean, no detail was too small or too insignificant. The grooming sessions, which involved brushing Secretariat's lustrous chestnut coat until it gleamed like copper, were as much about care as they were about

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bonding. Sweat's hands were skilled and gentle, and through them, Secretariat grew to trust his every touch and movement.

The relationship between Sweat and Secretariat transcended the usual bonds between a groom and a racehorse; theirs was a connection built on mutual respect and understanding.

Sweat seemed to possess an uncanny ability to sense Secretariat's needs and moods. He could tell when the horse was anxious, excited, or simply needed a quiet moment. It was not just the physical care that Eddie provided but an emotional support that was perhaps even more vital. The unspoken communication between them meant that Sweat often acted preemptively, addressing any signs of stress or discomfort before they could develop into bigger issues.

This level of care was indispensable to Secretariat's well-being, especially considering the physical demands of his racing schedule. The rigorous routines of training and racing required a stable environment where Secretariat could recuperate and rejuvenate, and Eddie was the architect of that sanctuary. His unwavering presence offered a sort of psychological anchor to the champion, contributing significantly to his exceptional performances on the track.

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Hidden within the daily grind were moments of extraordinary tenderness. Eddie would often be found talking softly to Secretariat, recounting his day or simply offering words of encouragement. It was clear that these moments were not just routine tasks but acts of love and devotion. Sweat's deep affection for Secretariat was palpable, and it was said that Secretariat, in turn, recognized and honored that love with his calm demeanor and brilliant performances.

Eddie Sweat's contribution extends beyond just the physical care of Secretariat; he was an integral part of creating the environment that allowed the horse to flourish. When Secretariat won the Triple Crown, the acclaim and glory were shared among owners, trainers, and jockeys, but it was Eddie who relished in a quieter, yet profoundly personal sense of victory. He knew that behind every triumphant sprint lay countless hours of unseen labor and unspoken bonds.

The importance of Sweat's role is further illuminated when one considers the demanding nature of the horse racing industry. The pressure to maintain a top-tier racehorse like Secretariat in peak physical condition is immense. The emotional and physical strain on those involved is often

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understated. Yet, through it all, Eddie Sweat remained steadfast, his devotion unyielding, his love for Secretariat unwavering. His is a story of loyalty and dedication, of the invisible hands that build legends while remaining in the shadows.

In summary, Eddie Sweat's role in Secretariat's story is one of silent heroism. The daily routines and extraordinary care he provided were crucial to the legendary success of the horse. Their unique bond, built on unwavering trust and mutual respect, added a rich, often overlooked layer to the narrative of Secretariat's greatness. It's a testament to the idea that behind every great champion, there are those whose efforts and sacrifices pave the way for greatness, even if they remain unsung.

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Chapter 3 : The World of Horse Racing - Challenges and Triumphs

Insights into the horse racing industry during Secretariat's era reveal a world that was as demanding as it was exhilarating. Horse racing, during the late 20th century, was an industry steeped in tradition, competition, and a relentless drive for excellence. Owners, trainers, jockeys, and grooms dedicated their lives to the pursuit of victory, often facing daunting obstacles along the way.

Maintaining a horse like Secretariat in peak performance required a finely tuned balance of rigorous training, impeccable care, and strategic racing decisions. The pressure was immense, with each member of the team playing a crucial role. Trainers had to be astute in managing the horse's physical condition and mental state, ensuring that Secretariat was always ready to perform at his best. Grooms like Eddie Sweat worked tirelessly behind the scenes, often in the shadows of the sport's spotlight, ensuring that Secretariat received the daily care and attention he needed.

The challenges were numerous. The physical demands on

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Secretariat's body were immense, requiring constant vigilance to prevent injuries and manage any arising health issues. This was a time before the advances in veterinary technology seen today, making the job of a groom and trainer even more critical. Additionally, the intense competition within the racing community meant that there was little room for error. A single misstep could mean the difference between victory and defeat.

The highs experienced by Secretariat's team were profound and often came with spectacular public acclaim. Victories were celebrated with jubilation, not only by those directly involved but by the public who followed Secretariat's career with avid interest. The thundering hooves of Secretariat as he crossed the finish line first, race after race, left an indelible mark on the sport and those who witnessed his greatness.

However, the lows, when they occurred, were equally

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Chapter 4 : The Making of a Champion - Training and Preparation

Part 4: The Making of a Champion - Training and Preparation

The journey to making Secretariat a champion was neither straightforward nor simple. It involved a rigorous training regimen, careful preparation, and the collaborative efforts of a dedicated team, all contributing to his remarkable achievements. Secretariat's training was characterized by a meticulous attention to detail, focusing on every aspect of his physical and mental conditioning to ensure he could perform at his peak.

The cornerstone of Secretariat's training was a carefully designed workout program that aimed to build his endurance, speed, and strength. The regime involved a combination of long runs to enhance stamina and shorter, more intense drills to boost his sprinting capabilities. Each session was meticulously planned by his trainer, Lucien Laurin, who understood the importance of balancing hard work with adequate rest to prevent overtraining and injuries. Laurin's

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experience and insight were crucial in tailoring a program that played to Secretariat's strengths while addressing any weaknesses.

Secretariat's diet was another critical component of his training process. His feed was closely monitored and consisted of a balanced blend of high-quality grains, proteins, and supplements designed to fuel his intense workouts and promote recovery. Great care was taken to ensure he received all the necessary nutrients to maintain his muscle mass, energy levels, and overall health. This aspect of his care was handled with precision, reflecting the importance of nutrition in the making of a world-class racehorse.

However, training Secretariat was not just about the physical aspects. Mental conditioning was equally essential. The team worked on building his confidence and focus, ensuring he was psychologically prepared for the pressures of racing. Secretariat's handler, Eddie Sweat, played a pivotal role in this aspect. His calming presence and understanding of the horse's temperament helped keep Secretariat relaxed and focused, allowing him to reach his full potential on race days.

The collaborative effort of the team behind Secretariat was

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profound. Laurin's strategic planning, Sweat's daily care and emotional support, and the oversight of the owners, the Chenery family, all meshed seamlessly to create a well-oiled machine. Each member of the team shared a common goal – to help Secretariat become the best racer he could be. Their coordination, communication, and collective dedication were exemplary, contributing significantly to Secretariat's legendary status.

Moreover, the preparation for each race was a detailed process. It involved not only the physical preparation but also the meticulous planning of race strategies. Laurin would study the competition, track conditions, and devise tactics that would give Secretariat an edge. The team would analyze every possible scenario, ensuring they were prepared for all contingencies. This level of detail illustrated the thoroughness with which Secretariat's career was managed, leaving little to chance.

Secretariat's training was also a story of innovation. Laurin was not afraid to try new methods or techniques if they promised to yield better results. This willingness to innovate, combined with traditional training wisdom, resulted in a regimen that was both progressive and highly effective. The

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balance of tried-and-true methods with innovative approaches kept Secretariat at the forefront of horse racing prowess.

In conclusion, the making of a champion like Secretariat involved much more than natural talent. It was the result of a carefully crafted training program, a balanced diet, mental conditioning, and the collaborative efforts of a dedicated and knowledgeable team. The meticulous attention to detail at every step of the way ensured that Secretariat was always at his best, leading to a string of victories that cemented his place in horse racing history. The making of Secretariat not only highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to training but also underscores the significance of teamwork and dedication in achieving greatness.

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Chapter 5 : Behind the Scenes - The Emotional Journey

Part 5: Behind the Scenes - The Emotional Journey

The emotional journey of those who worked closely with Secretariat is a tapestry woven with threads of perseverance, dedication, and personal sacrifice. Eddie Sweat, Secretariat's devoted groom, stands at the heart of this fabric. Sweat's commitment to Secretariat transcended the usual duties of a groom, evolving into a profound, almost familial bond, defined by mutual respect and care.

From the earliest hours of dawn until late at night, Sweat's life revolved around ensuring Secretariat's well-being. The toll of such dedication is immense, both physically and emotionally. For Sweat, every race was not just a professional milestone but a deeply personal one. He felt the pressure and the anxiety, the soaring highs of victory, and the crushing lows of setbacks as keenly as the jockey or the trainer. Yet, amidst the whirlwind of fame and success, his dedication never wavered.

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One notable anecdote that encapsulates Sweat's unwavering commitment occurred during a particularly grueling training period. Secretariat's intense regimen meant that every member of the team had to be on their game, day in and day out. Sweat, despite battling exhaustion and personal challenges, stayed resolute. His hands, roughened and calloused, never faltered in their gentleness when tending to the champion horse. Sweat's emotional resilience was as critical to Secretariat's success as any training strategy or diet plan.

The sacrifices weren't limited to just physical exertion. Sweat and others in the team often found themselves at a crossroads between their personal lives and their professional duties. Long hours at the stables meant missing out on family events, personal relationships strained under the weight of their commitments. Yet, their dedication to Secretariat seldom wavered, fueled by the incredible bond they shared with him and the belief in his potential to achieve greatness.

Memories and stories from these days, often shared by Sweat and his peers, are rich with emotion. For instance, after Secretariat clinched the Triple Crown, Sweat was seen quietly standing by the champion's stall, eyes filled with

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tears. It wasn't just the triumph that moved him but the culmination of their collective hard work and shared journey. This win was as much a personal victory for Sweat as it was for Secretariat, a testament to their bond.

Other members of Secretariat's inner circle – from trainer Lucien Laurin to jockey Ron Turcotte – also bore personal sacrifices and emotional burdens. Laurin, a meticulous planner, often found himself losing sleep over race strategies and training details. Turcotte, whose life on the racing circuit meant constant travel, faced its own set of challenges, but the exhilarating highs of success with Secretariat made every sacrifice worthwhile.

The emotional journey of working with Secretariat also brought moments of joy and fulfillment that are hard to quantify. Witnessing Secretariat's incredible performances and the sheer delight he brought to millions was, for many, a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The personal anecdotes, whether it was Laurel Racetrack or Belmont, tell of a team that, despite the odds, stood firm, driven by a singular purpose.

In summary, the emotional journey behind the scenes of

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Secretariat's career is a powerful narrative of human endurance and the extraordinary lengths the team went to. It highlights the personal anecdotes and experiences that paint a vivid picture of the lives entwined with Secretariat's story. Their unwavering commitment, despite the emotional and personal costs, not only shaped Secretariat's destiny but also left an indelible mark on their own lives. It is a testament to their perseverance, dedication, and the profound bond they shared with what many still consider the greatest racehorse of all time.

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Chapter 6 : Legacy and Impact - Secretariat's Enduring Influence

Secretariat's legacy in the world of horse racing is incomparable, a testament to his unmatched prowess and the indelible mark he left on the sport. Far beyond his incredible speed, Secretariat's influence spans across generations, capturing the admiration of racing enthusiasts and casual fans alike. His story transcends the confines of horse racing, embodying the quintessence of excellence, inspiration, and the pursuit of greatness.

The prominence of Secretariat can be measured not just by his unmistakable on-track achievements, but by the lasting inspiration he imparts. New generations of racing aficionados are continually drawn to the sport by his legend. His Triple Crown victory in 1973 remains an idyllic narrative of triumph, one that continues to set the standard for excellence. The mere mention of Secretariat evokes a reverence for his once-in-a-lifetime talent and the groundbreaking records he set, some of which still stand unchallenged.

Secretariat's influence is evident in how the sport is

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perceived and celebrated today. Racing events honor his legacy, continually striving to find and celebrate the next great champion who might evoke even a fraction of his brilliance. Statue tributes, documentaries, and countless articles keep his story alive, perpetuating the awe that came with his magnificent runs. Secretariat reminds us that true greatness transcends time, continually finding relevance and admiration as the years pass.

Moreover, Secretariat's success has had far-reaching effects on the horse breeding industry. His genetic legacy endures, with many breeders hopeful that a piece of Secretariat's unmatched ability might be present in their stock. His lineage is examined with painstaking detail, and his descendants are often held to exceptionally high expectations, seen as torchbearers of his impressive genetic line.

Reflections on Secretariat's impact also delve into the

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Chapter 7 : The Lasting Bond - Lessons from a Legendary Horse and Groom

Part 7: The Lasting Bond - Lessons from a Legendary Horse and Groom

In reflecting on "The Horse God Built," we return to the key themes and stories that have woven this narrative of triumph and devotion. The book not only paints a vivid picture of Secretariat's meteoric rise in the world of horse racing but also brings to life the untold story of Eddie Sweat, a humble groom whose tireless dedication played a crucial role in making Secretariat a legend.

One of the most compelling insights from the book is the special bond between Secretariat and Eddie Sweat. This relationship transcended the typical groom-horse dynamic, evolving into a deep connection marked by mutual trust and respect. Eddie Sweat's unwavering commitment to Secretariat, evident in his meticulous care and attention to detail, was a cornerstone of the horse's phenomenal success. Day in and day out, Sweat ensured that Secretariat was not just physically prepared for races, but also mentally and

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emotionally poised to compete at the highest level.

This unique relationship between horse and groom speaks to broader universal lessons. Loyalty, for one, is a recurring theme throughout the book. Eddie Sweat's loyalty to Secretariat was unwavering, and it highlights the profound impact that a dedicated individual can have behind the scenes. Sweat's dedication also exemplifies the power of hard work; it was through his countless hours of effort—often unnoticed and uncelebrated—that Secretariat was able to achieve his legendary status.

Another powerful takeaway from this story is the pursuit of greatness. Both Secretariat and Eddie Sweat embodied this pursuit, albeit in different arenas. For Secretariat, it was on the racetrack, where he broke records and captivated audiences worldwide. For Sweat, it was in the quiet, unglamorous work of grooming and caring for the horse he loved. Together, they demonstrated that greatness is often a collaborative effort. It is not only the star that shines but also the supporting cast that makes the spotlight possible.

Final reflections on the bond between Secretariat and Eddie Sweat extend beyond the world of horse racing. Their story is

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a touching reminder of how meaningful relationships, built on trust and dedication, can lead to extraordinary achievements. As readers, we are inspired to see that behind every great success story, there is often a team of unsung heroes whose contributions are invaluable. This realization pushes us to value and recognize the hard work and loyalty of those who help others achieve greatness.

In conclusion, "The Horse God Built" by Lawrence Scanlan is much more than a book about a famous racehorse; it is a tribute to the unseen efforts that fuel excellence. The lessons of loyalty, hard work, and the relentless pursuit of greatness are universal, transcending the confines of racing to inspire readers from all walks of life. Through the story of Eddie Sweat and Secretariat, we are reminded of the profound connections that can form between humans and animals, and how these bonds can lead to legendary accomplishments.

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