

Secretariat: The horse that built a community

Written by By Greg McNeil For the Sun
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Secretariat is considered the greatest racehorse in American history. In his book, author Lawrence Scanlan called Secretariat *The Horse God Built*. Indeed, if you haven't seen Disney's *Secretariat* I highly recommend this powerful and enjoyable movie. However, as a matter of practice I tend to look for the hidden elements in stories that apply to the lives we live here in Gallup and our surrounding communities.

If you are familiar with the story of Secretariat then you've probably heard of his jockey, Ron Turcotte, Lucien Laurin, the famous trainer and Penny Chenery, Secretariat's owner, but have you ever heard of Eddy Sweat? I'll come back to Eddy Sweat in just a moment but for now allow me to continue.

When we walk into a professional establishment like the bank, restaurant, hospital, airport, the mayor's office, community chamber of commerce or museum we are immediately drawn to the symbols of power, the individuals whose names are on the plaques or those in the stories we read. However, we seem to forget the staggering amount of activity that goes on behind the scenes to produce the enjoyment and sense of confidence we feel receiving service. Yet, without those who are the backbone of organizations we couldn't enjoy the countless services available in our community.

Enter Eddy Sweat. Eddy Sweat was Secretariat's groomer, handler, horse whisperer and the one everyone counted on to make sure Secretariat was healthy and ready to run. No one spent more time with Secretariat than Eddy Sweat. Eddy Sweat was the secret to Secretariat's Triple Crown success.

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The most famous line in the movie was said by Mrs. Chenery's father, played by actor Scott Glenn, who said, *"Let him run his race darling."* I'll admit to getting choked up when I heard this because it spoke directly to the power and possibility of great leadership and how dreams are built. Mrs. Chenery owned Secretariat, but she was no jockey and certainly not a horse trainer. What Mrs. Chenery did was allow those she hired to effectively run their race or perform in the capacity they were hired for. The result was the fastest racehorse in history.

As a business owner in Gallup I have had opportunity to meet other business owners and professionals, some native to Gallup and those who came to Gallup from other places. In every encounter there is the discussion on what it takes for Gallup to grow in ways that will allow the city to fulfill its highest mission; to support those that make up its community in addition to the thousands of tourists that come to Gallup every year.

The first thing that comes to mind is to recognize that no matter where the employee is on the rung of power every community is composed of thousands of characters like Eddy Sweat, the employee no one knows yet they are instrumental to the community we enjoy. The other idea is far more fundamental – remember that we only hire individuals with the capacity to elevate our community and when we do this we simply need to *allow them to run their race*.

Coach G

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