

Zebulon Ray Wicker Chatham Baseball Star

By Pat Andrew Lowe, February 2021*

Zebulon Ray Wicker grew up in Siler City, the son of small business owners, June and Flossie Wicker. The family home on North Chatham Avenue was just across the street from Wicker's Cash Grocery. Zeb grew up helping at the store along with his two younger sisters, Mozelle and Madge.



Zeb, six feet, three inches tall and lanky, wasn't really interested in the family business. He had bigger dreams of playing baseball in the major leagues! It was a tall order for a small-town kid. But Zeb was a natural athlete and sports came easy to him. According to former school referee, the late Roy Marley, Zeb once punted a football from one goal post to the other during a Siler City High School game. His reputation on the

football field was overshadowed only by his ability on the baseball field. His wicked right-handed curve ball and left-handed smashing home runs soon got the attention of professional baseball scouts. It must have been the homerun he hit so hard that it was never found. Decades later, folks still know Zeb by his high-school nickname, "Fisty."

At seventeen, Zeb was offered a professional contract with the St. Louis Cardinals. His dad had to sign since he was under age. The signing bonus was a check for \$1,500. With it, Zeb bought a new white Cadillac convertible, two small rental houses, and put the rest in the bank! It was three years later—in 1942—when Zeb set off for training camp in St. Louis.

Zeb had a great start with the Cardinals and went on to play for the Cleveland Indians before he was called up to serve in WWII.



For three years, Sgt. Zeb Wicker served in the infantry and fought all over Europe including at the Battle of the Bulge, where he was trapped on a hill by enemy fire for two days. There was an Army baseball team made up of Major Leaguers who had been drafted; Zeb was one of their pitching stars and major hitters.

Zeb continued to play minor league ball after the war. His player stats show him playing for teams affiliated with the St. Louis Cardinals, Philadelphia Phillies, Brooklyn Dodgers, Cleveland Indians, and Milwaukee Braves from 1946 until 1953.

After the war, Zeb settled in Greensboro, married, had a son and a daughter, and joined the Greensboro Police Department.

Later he went into business for himself buying real estate and owning a ladies clothing store in Siler City named for his wife Adele. Zeb passed away at age 79 in 2001.

**Pat Andrew Lowe is Zeb Wicker's niece. She grew up in Siler City and worked on The Chatham News every summer while at Guilford College. She also wrote many stories for The Chatham Record. She currently lives in Texas.*

